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“ONE MORE WAY TO SELL NEW ORLEANS”: AIRBNB AND THE COMMODIFICATION OF AUTHENTICITY THROUGH LOCAL EMOTIONAL LABOR

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THESIS

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the
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By

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ABSTRACT OF THESIS

"ONE MORE WAY TO SELL NEW ORLEANS": AIRBNB AND THE COMMODIFICATION OF AUTHENTICITY THROUGH LOCAL EMOTIONAL LABOR

Since 2014, Airbnb has been the poster-child for an impassioned debate over how to best regulate short-term home rentals (STR's) in New Orleans, Louisiana. As critical perspectives toward on-demand economic practice become increasingly common, it is important to understand how the impacts of STR platforms like Airbnb extend beyond the realm of what is traditionally conceptualized as the economic (i.e., pressure on housing markets). In this thesis, I explore the ways in which Airbnb recalibrates the spatial and temporal rhythms of everyday neighborhood life for people external to the formal trappings of an STR contract. Drawing in particular on theories of authenticity and feminist political economy, I argue that locals' emotional labor of "playing host" is necessarily enrolled into the creation of value for Airbnb, and is essential to the reproduction of the platform's business model and marketing rhetoric.

KEYWORDS: Airbnb, short-term rentals, New Orleans, emotional labor, feminist political economy, authenticity

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May 4, 2018

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

LIST OF FIGURES

CHAPTER 1.

INTRODUCTION

1.1. A Funeral

On September 27, 2016, a jazz funeral processed down Perdido Street in front of the New Orleans City Hall. Despite the brass band, however, and despite the marchers clad in black, this was no ordinary jazz funeral – it was far too somber.

The typical jazz funeral is a sort of traveling memorial service for a departed loved one, arranged in the format of a second-line parade. Second-line parades, the "massive moving street festivals" that "regularly draw between three and five thousand people," are a tradition entirely unique to New Orleans (Hartnell 2009, 731). They are named not for the leading "first line" of brass musicians, but rather for the joiners who walk and dance in tow: friends, family, social club members, residents of the neighborhood, and sometimes even tourists, constituting the "second line." These parades – the real ones, at least – are "organized and funded by working class African-Americans to celebrate the anniversaries of their distinctive social clubs and benevolent societies" (Regis 1999, 472; quoted from Hartnell 2009). Second-lines generally take place in residential parts of New Orleans, but some "mock" second-lines can be found in places like the Central Business District and the French Quarter. As Anna Hartnell notes, these tend to be in the *style* of a traditional second-line, but performed in a white space for a mostly white tourist audience, deeply distanced from the second-line's "more serious roots as a community institution formed in part to combat racist oppression" (2009, 732).

Indeed, second-lining has always been and continues to be a political activity. The Social Aid & Pleasure Clubs that historically host such parades were formed, following the Civil War, in response to the refusal of many insurance companies to cover recently emancipated African Americans (Kunian 2007). These benevolent societies provided members with financial assistance during times of funeral expenses, medical bills, and general hardship. According to NewOrleansOnline.com – the "official New Orleans tourism guide" – benevolent societies served "a purpose that today has been largely supplanted by insurance companies" (NewOrleansOnline.com 2018, "Social Aid And Pleasure Clubs"). Ironically, this elides the fact that Social Aid & Pleasure Clubs were

formed precisely in response to discriminatory policies from insurers of the time. Second-lines as political statements remain popular today; the Lower Ninth Ward museum The House of Dance and Feathers invokes Henri Lefebvre when they write on their website that Social Aid & Pleasure Clubs exemplify a "right to the city." In the wake of Hurricane Katrina, they argue, "social club parades became more important than ever as they called people home to reclaim the city, and say 'We are New Orleans,' and 'This is our city" (House of Dance and Feathers 2018, "Social Aid & Pleasure Clubs").

Jazz funerals are arranged in the fashion of a second-line, the marchers following in line behind the musicians. In doing so, the marchers "accompany the deceased from the church where the service is held to the cemetery where he or she is to be interred" (Coclanis and Coclanis 2005, 86). Early on in my fieldwork, I stumbled across the procession of a jazz funeral in Treme. I watched from the sidewalk as friends and family of the deceased celebrated in a throng of bright colors, the casket in tow of a horse-drawn carriage rolling down St. Philip Street, all of them moving, dancing, passing the coffeehouse, the recreation center, Tuba Fats Square, dancing, moving, a sunny day, en route to pass Louis Armstrong Park, a thirty-two acre stretch of visual barrier between Treme and the French Quarter that before 1970 was blocks of houses, and then passing Charbonnet Funeral Home, a "mainstay of the Treme community for 132 years" which, in addition to serving as a gathering point for jazz funerals and community functions, held public screenings of the HBO series *Treme* upon its release in 2014 (Pope 2015); and in all of this the only real available shade could be found in the shadow cast by the I-10 expressway, a snaking concrete leviathan upheld by painted pillars that stand on what was once a grassy median, what New Orleanians call "neutral ground," which used to be flanked on either side by live oak trees and a string of black-owned businesses, from sandwich shops to sewing-machine stores – "like black people's Canal Street" – until the 1968 demolition that made way for the overpass (see Figure 1.1).

Figure 1.1: Jazz funeral in Treme (photo by author).

1.2. Airbnb and STR's in New Orleans

What I witnessed in Treme was more or less a typical jazz funeral, but the procession of black-clad marchers going down Perdido Street on September 27, 2016, was something else entirely: a staged protest against what residents from the St. Roch, Marigny, and Bywater neighborhoods were calling the "death of affordable housing." The Treme Brass Band led a small contingent of activists while playing a "funeral dirge"; coffins were carried with "RIP real neighbors" and "RIP affordable housing" scrawled on the lids (Litten 2016a). Of course, affordable housing has long been an issue in New Orleans leading up to, and then more prominently following, Hurricane Katrina. The Reagan administration's cutbacks and the Clinton administration's HOPE VI program, "designed to privatize and downsize public housing," both fell heavy on New Orleans' poorest residents (Arena 2012, xviii) – not to mention that many public housing units in the city were damaged and never rebuilt after the storm. Indeed, Neil Smith's 2005 forecast for the future of New Orleans proved dismal but prescient:

> "After the Bush hurricane, the poor, African-American and working class people who evacuated will not be welcomed back to New Orleans, which will in all likelihood be rebuilt as a tourist magnet with a Disneyfied BigEasyVille oozing even more manufactured authenticity than the surviving French Quarter nearby. (Slater 2006, 737).

So, while there is no shortage of reasons to protest when it comes to affordable housing, these activists were marching specifically in objection of the city's laissez-faire enforcement policy toward short-term rentals (STR's). Many citizens felt that a proliferation of unregulated STR listings was putting increased pressure on already volatile housing markets, with other deleterious effects for neighborhood residents, including the transformation of what would have otherwise been full-time housing into a revolving door of vacation rentals. The protestors' message was directed at City Council, which was scheduled to vote on a spate of new regulations the next week, but the main source of their ire was Airbnb: a digital marketplace that facilitates STR contracts between a host and a guest, and by far the most popular STR platform in New Orleans. At the time of the march, there were 4,456 listings available on Airbnb, 68% of which were frequently listed (i.e., available for rental more than 120 days annually)[1] and 73% of which were whole-home rentals (i.e., no host is present during the rental).

The "death of affordable housing" demonstration was not the first instance of citizens having flipped the script on a jazz funeral in order to send a symbolic message. Vincanne Adams has detailed how after Hurricane Katrina swept across New Orleans, Nettie Stewart – a grandmother from the city's Gentilly area – spent four years battling with banks and insurance companies for reimbursement on her significantly damaged home. When the negotiations failed, and she could no longer afford the necessary renovations while continuing to pay a mortgage, Nettie's only option was to demolish the place – but not before they had a "jazz funeral for the house." According to Adams, "Like a traditional New Orleans second line… Nettie's funeral procession for her home helped her actualize and process emotions in a familiar and comforting ritual" (2010, 111). Unlike Nettie's story, however, the jazz funeral for affordable housing had a specific

[1] Based on archived data scrapes from InsideAirbnb.com. According to Wachsmuth and Weisler (2018), "Frequently rented" Airbnb units are defined as rented more than 60 days annually, and available for rental more than 120 days annually. Since I do not have access to data regarding how many days a listing was actually rented, I derive "Frequently listed" from their formulation.

political agenda: a call for the New Orleans City Council to "enshrine a prohibition on whole-home rentals into the city's zoning code" (Litten 2016a).

At the time of the protest, all STR's were technically illegal, but rarely was that law enforced. However, the city had been aware of the issue for years, and local journalism outlets had covered the issue for a few years prior. According to one of my interviewees who worked for the New Orleans city government, complaints about STR's were being filed and meetings being held as early as 2011. Similarly, local newspaper coverage of how STR's were affecting neighborhoods began in 2014. By late 2015, after a fair amount of reporting on the topic from local sources like *The Times-Picayune, The Lens*, and *The Advocate,* the New Orleans City Council requested that the City Planning Commission (CPC) draft a set of recommendations for how best to regulate STR's. In August 2016, the CPC had suggested a set of amendments to the city's zoning code that would make STR's legal, taxable, and enforceable. Protestors marched on the heels of this report, and on the eve of the Council's vote, encouraging the New Orleans City Council to adopt the CPC's recommendations.

The City Council ultimately voted to adopt the regulations on October 20, 2016, but they adjusted three key components of the CPC's original recommendations. First, the CPC had recommended a ban on whole-home rentals – according to their report, "whole unit short term rentals in residential districts throughout the year" would have "too great an impact on residential neighborhoods" (CPC 2016, 1). Second, the CPC advised that STR hosts who were not present at the time of the booking be restricted to a thirty-day annual rental limit (CPC 2016, 21). Third, the CPC's report included a density limit for how many STR's and/or traditional bed and breakfasts are permitted per blockface (CPC 2016, 33). In contrast, Table 1.1 shows the current regulations – which the City Council voted to adopt – in which whole-home (Temporary) short-term rentals were increased to a 90-day limit, and the density limit was abolished. Critics claimed that 90 days was too much, and that all Temporary licenses should require a homestead exemption.[2] City councilmembers argued that such a regulatory structure would make enforcement nearly impossible. As my interviewee Ron, a government official involved

[2] The homestead exemption is a property tax exemption, granted on the condition that the home in question is the homeowner's singular domicile, or primary residence.

with the regulations, put it, "you get to the point where you have to make [short-term renting] legal, at least in some places, in order to make it illegal in other places."

Table 1.1: Types of STR Licenses in New Orleans*

License Type	Applicant	License duration	Fee
Commercial: *Owner/tenant cannot occupy*	**Property owner** individual or organization	Year-round	$500/unit
Temporary: *Owner/tenant cannot occupy*	**Property owner** Individual or organization **Tenant** With letter from owner	90-days: Continuous or must apply for additional license if separate time during the year	$150/unit or $50 if an owner with Homestead Exemption
Accessory: *Single or double unit only (Owner must live on-site)*	**Property owner** Individual with Homestead Exemption only	Year-round	$200

(Adapted from https://data.nola.gov/stories/s/6kd7-6nca)

The debate continued well after the regulations were implemented (see Appendix). New Orleans is no exception in either its attempts to regulate or its resistance from citizens. In most cases – from New York to Los Angeles and from Amsterdam to Paris – the laws on the books were not written to account for the type of building or land use (especially in residential zoning) that platforms like Airbnb facilitate. All of these cities faced similar problems to New Orleans. As Tom Slee details in his book-length critique of the sharing economy, the discourse of a "quirky world of individuals sharing the homes in which they live" is not always consistent with the ways in which so-called home-sharing platforms – and Airbnb in particular – operate in reality. In fact, what often characterizes Airbnb's relationship with cities at the municipal level is a resistance to existing regulatory structures and, ironically, an unwillingness to share information that would streamline enforcement of those regulations.

Since Brian Chesky, Joe Gebbia, and Nathan Blecharczyk founded Airbnb in 2008, the platform's rapid ascendance as a digital marketplace for the short-term rental of homes has thrown planning offices around the globe into disarray. As one of my interviewees described, Airbnb was "the bull in the china shop" when it came to any kind of STR regulation – and yet, like any startup, it was not always so lucrative. Named AirBed & Breakfast back then, the company struggled for a little over a year before successfully enrolling in the Y Combinator program, a seed accelerator and popular

launch pad for Silicon Valley tech entrepreneurs. Y Combinator offered Airbnb $20,000 of seed money and three months of "start-up school" in exchange for a 6% stake in the company (Gallagher 2016, 25). In the following years, Airbnb's business saw improvement; the company went through a series of impressive funding rounds with venture capital firms like Sequoia Capital and Greylock Partners, respectively, for sums of $600,000 and $7.2 million. More recently, Airbnb has raised $1 billion in debt financing with J.P. Morgan Chase (Crunchbase.com 2018, "Airbnb Funding Rounds"), and is slowly charting its path toward an initial public offering. The company was pulled in nearly $100 million in profit for the full year in 2017 – a rare feat for a tech company so young (Swisher 2018).

1.3. Thesis outline

Broadly speaking, my goal over the course of the thesis is to offer a critical perspective on the relationship between various kinds of neighborhood change and Airbnb listings in New Orleans. I argue that Airbnb creates a convenient short-circuit for the lucrative commodification of housing units as well as of "authentic" experience. However, this process of commodification relies on a recalibration of certain spatial and temporal rhythms in the everyday life of long-term residents. In this project, I analyze the uneven power structure that is internal to how Airbnb operates in New Orleans, in which the emotional labor of people in the city are enrolled into the project of creating value for the local tourism industry and for Airbnb – value from which those people do not always benefit in turn.

To be sure, my goal is not to flatly denounce Airbnb, nor to condemn all its hosts and anyone who uses the platform. Although I hope that critical work on Airbnb will compel a conscientious usage by its customers, I am aligned with Tom Slee in that "it is not my intent to make you feel guilty or defensive about taking part in sharing economy exchanges" like Airbnb (2015, 13). Indeed:

> "The problems with the Sharing Economy do not lie with the individual participant looking for a novel vacation or a quick ride across town, any more than the broader problems of consumerism lie with the individual filling a car with gasoline or buying a new pair of shoes. The problems lie with the companies themselves, and with the financial interests using those companies to drive a broader agenda of deregulation in search of private wealth." (Slee 2015, 13-14)

As such, I seek to understand Airbnb as a powerful actor in the cultural and political economic landscape: whom it affects, how it affects them, and how they respond.

This project is an excavation of fragments that have lodged themselves in the different space-times of New Orleans. Some will be reachable through conversations with residents and interviews that I conducted during fieldwork, while others are better hidden and demand archival and historical research. In order to understand Airbnb, this thesis casts a wide net, exploring tourism policies and regulations that predate Airbnb's gestation by over half a century. In Chapter 2, I outline a conceptual framework for understanding the specific condition of Airbnb in New Orleans, which I situate at the intersection of three key literatures: authenticity, tourism, and the neoliberal city; feminist political economy; and digital geographies of on-demand economic practice. Over the course of the thesis, I do not treat these as central points of inquiry, but rather as theories that guide my understanding of New Orleans' STR debate, as well as the social, economic, and political milieus in which it is unfolding. As such, there will be sections that lack any discussion of, say, emotional labor or authenticity as a neoliberal place-making strategy. In Chapter 3, I detail my methodology, which is largely a discourse analysis of eighteen semi-structured interviews. I focus in particular on the reflexivity demanded by conducting fieldwork in New Orleans as a non-New Orleanian.

I divide my empirical examinations into three chapters: "Understanding Discourses," "Locating Authority," and "Commodifying Authenticity." Drawing on a number of interviews, Chapter 4 is a discussion of my discourse analysis. I identify and analyze the most prominent discourses – some of which I expected to encounter, and others that emerged during fieldwork and interviews – surrounding Airbnb in New Orleans. In Chapter 5, I take a step back from interviews and consider the authority of geographic representation on Airbnb, looking specifically at how a particular moment of urban planning in the 1970's gained authority through depictions on digital spatial media. Finally, in Chapter 6, I draw on theories of emotional labor to synthesize questions surrounding authority, authenticity, and Airbnb. I explore the mechanisms by which neighbors can become enrolled into the work of creating value for Airbnb and for the local tourist industry, without necessarily reaping any benefits.

CHAPTER 2.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK: AUTHENTICITY, EMOTIONAL LABOR, AND THE "SHARING" ECONOMY

In this chapter, I outline a conceptual framework for analyzing the specific situation of Airbnb in New Orleans. In doing so I identify three sets of literatures – first, *authenticity, tourism, and the neoliberal city;* second, *feminist political economy*; and third, *digital geographies of on-demand (or "sharing") economic practice*.

I first focus on authenticity as a trope that "does important work"; specifically, 1) providing a "fantasy" for tourism marketing (Knudsen et al 2016, 33), 2) acting as a "cultural form of power over space" (Zukin 2010, xiii), and 3) supporting a neoliberal place-making strategy (Harvey 1989, Gotham 2007). Next, building on feminist political economic theory, I review the "hegemony of neoliberal global capitalist" discourse (Gibson-Graham 2008, 56), applying the concepts of "diverse economies," social reproduction, and emotional labor to the situation of Airbnb in New Orleans (Gibson-Graham 1996, 2006, 2008; Glazer 1984; Federici 2004; Dyck 2005; Hochschild 1984). Finally, I draw on scholarship of digital geographies to argue that the emerging rhetoric of the "sharing" economy casts a much less hopeful future than Gibson-Graham's conceptualization of possible forms of post-capitalism. More specifically, I draw on Richardson's treatment of sharing as a "performance" that is "framed as both part of the capitalist economy and as an alternative" to show how the post-capitalist imaginary is appropriated to capitalist ends (2015, 121). I highlight various moments of this framework with empirical examples that are expanded and deepened in later chapters.

2.1. Authenticity and tourism, Airbnb and fantasy

I approach the idea of authenticity with the fear that I toss fuel on a dying fire; the concept has already been theorized into oblivion.[3] Some would say that a focus on

[3] By this, I mean to say that authenticity has been so vastly theorized that it proves challenging to reign in, and while it would be impossible (not to mention unnecessary) to review authenticity in all of its formulations, it is worth detailing a few key moments in its conceptual lineage. Following the advice of Erik Cohen, I try to avoid the folly of uncritically introducing authenticity as "a philosophical concept" into a social scientific context (1988, 374) – though it is also possible that, with this footnote, I've leaned into Cohen's suggestion a bit overenthusiastically. In any case, we can find traces of the idea dating back to

authenticity feels analytically futile, (Potter 2010), morally stunting (Magill 2012, 171), and even essentialist (Adorno 1970, Foucault 1994 [from Varga and Guignon 2017]), so why rekindle its embers? In short: because it matters. I align my work with Jane Lovell

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Plato, who hinted at authenticity in his *Theory of Forms*, and Socrates, who stylized it in his dictum to "Know thyself" (Lovell and Bull 2017, 1; Potter 2010, 19). For the purposes of this footnote, however arduous, I trace the concept of authenticity to the Reformation of the Protestant Church in the early 16th century. For the Church, the word "sincerity" – which we can think for now as equivalent to authenticity – was "a moral shorthand for what the reformed faith claimed to offer: a return to simplicity, honesty, forthrightness, purity, and adherence to Christ's original message" (Magill 2012, 31). In other words, authenticity appeared as an answer to a problem, and as such was framed as an abstract ideal towards which to strive – something to *return* to. Unmasking true intention was "holy duty," and in this regard, the pursuit of authenticity was a concept that anchored the Church in a position of power (ibid 44). The famed essayist Michel de Montaigne, writing in France around the time of the Reformation, took a similar position that "it is a craven and servile idea to disguise ourselves and hide under a mask" (40). *Re*-turn, *re*-form, *un*-mask: we can see a discourse taking shape.

Going forward, theories of authenticity circulated mostly in the realm of existential philosophy. Rousseau and his contemporaries (i.e., Hobbes and Montesquieu) were some of the foremost philosophers to bring the idea into fashion. Elsewhere, Kierkegaard, Heidegger, Sartre, and de Beauvoir developed this position, but Rousseau will do the trick for now. In his *Discourse on Inequality*, Rousseau suggests that "what destroys authenticity is our society" (Trilling 1972, 93). According to Rousseau, "The very study of *original* man, of his *real* wants," is the only way to discern the origin of moral and political inequality (1755, 8, emphasis mine). The idea of some abstract but authentic self that predates a social contract, but could potentially be regained – regardless of the argument that Rousseau was egregiously misinterpreted on this front (for example, some claim that his philosophy has been misread as a glorification of the state of nature [Lovejoy 1923]) – has remained prominent in popular and academic discourse. William Cronon's (1982) critique of "wilderness" as a tenuous and socially constructed idea demonstrates this well, as does Dydia DeLyser's examination of how a tourist "ghost town" in California was produced to feel authentic (1999). More recently, Sarah Jacquette Ray's exploration of the local food movement speaks to a culinary desire for authenticity, as well as the ways in which that movement has reified social hierarchies (2013).

In any case, by the late 19th and early 20th century, authenticity had also made its way on the burgeoning scene of critical theory and literary work, notably in the writing of modernist poets. In William Butler Yeats' essay *The Symbolism of Poetry*, Yeats argues that colors, sounds, and forms have "pre-ordained energies" (1961, 30). Similarly, T.S. Eliot's concept of the *objective correlative* – a set of objects, situations, or chain of events that objectively correlates to a particular feeling – seeks to deem an authentic *a priori* relationship between objects and emotions (1921). Eliot's *The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock*, an "embodiment of turn-of-the-century angst [toward] a world sucked dry by skepticism, cynicism, and industrialism," has even been read as the invention of that authenticity-starved urbanite whom we've come to begrudge as The Hipster (Prior 2015); i.e., "I grow old ... / I grow old ... / I shall wear the bottoms of my trousers rolled. / Shall I part my hair behind? / Do I dare to eat a peach? / I shall wear white flannel trousers, and walk upon the beach." In addition to the theme of apocalypse, there is a pervasive sense in these works (see also Yeats' *Second Coming*, Eliot's *Wasteland*) of having lost and needing to recover – having been distanced, and needing to return. Where modernists were generally concerned with authenticity as an *object*, in that it was a thing to locate, acquire, or achieve, postmodern philosophers and writers were concerned with authenticity as a *subject*, as in a thing to be explored and studied and problematized, exploring the tension of how one constitutes oneself in a dialectic between authentic and inauthentic.

All this to say: authenticity has been called into question over hundreds of years and by hundreds of people, scholars or not. This review fails to detail the work of cultural critics and historians in the later 20th century (Berman 1970, Trilling 1972), as well as that of sociologists (MacCannell 1973, Hochschild 1983). Furthermore, it neglects to address the white and male and upper class privilege that is so often immanent to the theories of authenticity. These are issues that will be addressed later in the chapter.

and Chris Bull in a shared contention that "revisiting the concept of authenticity has never been so relevant" (2017, 1). To borrow a working definition from Richard Campanella, authenticity refers to "the narrowness of the gap between one's innermost nature and that which gets expressed outwardly for external consumption" (2014, 296).[4] The notion of identifying and narrowing this "gap" has seen a revival in public discourse, and indeed, its incarnations are vast. "Post-truth" and "fake news" paint a portrait of our inauthentic moment (Lovell and Bull 2017, 1); the promise of an authentic, proof-of-work currency through blockchain systems continues to create financial ruptures; and "sharing" economy platforms like Airbnb promise that authentic experiences and sustainable futures are achievable through their services.

None of these examples are meant to argue that one thing is more authentic than the other, or how *this* is more authentic than *that*, but rather to establish authenticity as an important vector along which a kind of public consciousness[5] is drifting (or perhaps being nudged). More importantly, these examples point toward a longer conversation about the deep imbrications between authenticity and capitalism. Lizzie Richardson has suggested that, in the case of Airbnb, the "major factor for guests (often more important than any 'authenticity') is the combination of price and location" (2015, 125). On the contrary, I argue that in many places – New Orleans in particular – location, price, and authenticity are too intertwined to be separated. Indeed, studies pertaining to motivation for using Airbnb have shown that "aspects relating to authenticity also play a major role" in compelling Airbnb guests to use the platform, both influencing their desire for "social interaction [with] hosts" and "the location of flats/rooms within the city (in residential quarters)" (Stors and Kagermeier 2015, 4; see also Guttentag 2015). Citing its own economic impact studies, Airbnb claims that 91% of its travelers "want to 'live like a local'" (Airbnb 2018, "Economic Impact"). In short, in order to understand Airbnb we must take authenticity, and its commodification, seriously.

[4] A working definition that is itself probably borrowed from Lionel Trilling's definition of *sincerity*: "a congruence between avowal and actual feeling" (1972, 2).

[5] Perhaps public "unconsciousness" is a better phrase, here, since proponents of these examples do not overtly frame them as "authentic".

2.1.1. Authenticity and tourism

Authenticity has long been a staple of tourism studies literature. Boorstin (1961) and MacCannell (1973) are often cited as the earliest theorists of authenticity in the context of tourism and commodification. Boorstin argued that tourists appreciate a mere and inauthentic "approximation of the 'real'" (Lovell and Bull 2017, 4), while MacCannell's theory of "staged authenticity" (1973) suggests that a quest (albeit an impossible one) for true authentic experience is a key motivator for the touristic consciousness. For MacCannell, the discovery and experience of a "back region" is a major motivator in the touristic consciousness. In a case study of a village, Hondarribia, in the Spanish Basque country, Greenwood (1977) was explicit in his concern with the effects of tourism on local communities. He argues that the commodification of a traditional Hondarribian event ultimately led to the stripping of its meaning, and while it could still be performed in "outward forms" for money, "it is no longer being performed by [Hondarribians] for themselves" (2004 [1977], 164).

These theories have been far from immune to criticism. As Lovell and Bull note, both Boorstin and MacCannell "treat tourists as homogenous groups" (2017, 5). Erik Cohen (1988) entertains a broad critique of the state of tourism studies, in which he argues that MacCannell seems to expect his audience to "intuitively" know what is meant by authenticity, and that Greenwood makes an overgeneralized, "categorical assertion". Cohen argues that MacCannell deploys authenticity as "a philosophical concept which has been uncritically introduced into sociological analysis" (Cohen 1988, 374). For Cohen, if one were to read MacCannell and Greenwood to the letter:

> "It thus emerges that, the more tourism flourishes, the more it allegedly becomes a colossal deception. These assumptions are highly persuasive… But the conclusion seems far-fetched and hard to accept; unless, of course, one adopts a view of modern society as completely absurd and dominated by sinister powers, so that its members are surreptitiously misled to believe that they genuinely have authentic experiences, while in fact being simultaneously disbarred from them." (Cohen 1988, 373)

Cohen writes that authenticity, rather than an intuitive "given," is a flexible and nebulous concept; that tourists usually do not demand "total authenticity" in their travels; and that

many tourists will accept a "substantially staged product and experience as 'authentic'" (1988, 378-379). As such, he argues that commodification does not *necessarily* "destroy the meaning of cultural products," and that it can sometimes prove beneficial for the host community (1988, 383). In short, Cohen sees redemptive possibilities for tourism and for commodification.[6]

Cohen's disenchantment with the work of MacCannell and Greenwood is reminiscent of Bruno Latour's polemic to academia. In his provocative piece, Latour asks, "What's the real difference between conspiracists and… a teachable version of social critique inspired by a too quick reading of, let's say, a sociologist as eminent as Pierre Bourdieu?" (Latour 2004, 228-229) Like Latour, Cohen urges us to look past the notion that society is simply "dominated by sinister powers" while its members are roundly dispossessed of any real agency in their behavior and practices. And yet, Cohen's hesitance to acknowledge certain structures of power – structures which, ranging from exclusionary neoliberal capitalism to a normalization of right-wing radicalism, are sinister at best and dominant at worst – calls for a moment of pause. At any rate, both Cohen and Latour's warnings highlight the need for nuance in critique of commodification.[7]

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[6] Cohen is particularly concerned with Greenwood, reading his analysis as a flawed "categorical assertion that, once a cultural product is commoditized, 'the meaning is gone'" (1988, 381). In an epilogue to Greenwood's original essay, penned in 2004, Greenwood himself was agreeable to Cohen's critique. He wrote, "I find myself not only more troubled by my own judgments but also by the professional stance that they imply. It is not that my critique of tourism's cultural impact seems wrong, but I now experience the way I researched and delivered this judgment to be professionally self-serving. … Gradually, I have learned to ask for whom and to whom these narratives speak. The bulk are written for professional peers, showing the moral uprightness of the researcher but not contributing in any obvious way to the amelioration of the problems. … Not only does this constitute treating people like objects in a form of professional commodity production from which they benefit very little, but I think it also contributes to poor quality research" (Greenwood 2004, 167-168). I resonated deeply with Greenwood's piece in my initial reading, finding his analysis thoughtful and righteous and even reminiscent of my own project. Upon reading his reflection on his own work, however, I am unsettled, and take Greenwood's reflection seriously as a cautionary tale. In the course of this thesis, I make conscious efforts to not treat research participants and the city of New Orleans as "objects" in the form of my own "professional commodity production." I speak more overtly to such issues of positionality and reflexivity toward one's research in Chapter 3.

[7] Ignatius J. Reilly, the protagonist of the New Orleans-based novel *A Confederacy of Dunces*, is a ridiculous picaresque character: between his relentless fits of belching, Ignatius entertains delusions of grandeur, fancying himself a purveyor of medieval values who is "forced to function in a century which I loathe." His "pyloric valve periodically closes in response to a lack of a 'proper geometry and theology' in the modern world." He is a devoted student of the 5th century philosopher Boethius, which underpins his steadfast belief that modern society is crumbling to the ground, spinning evermore downward on the Wheel of Fortuna: "Having once been so high, humanity fell so low. What had once been dedicated to the soul

In the wake of Cohen's article, there has emerged a wealth of literature that considers authenticity as a tenuous and socially constructed force. Specifically, it has been explored from the perspective of Heideggerian "existentialism" (Steiner and Reisinger 2006, Rickly-Boyd 2013); broken down into a three-part typology for analytic frameworks (Wang 1999); and engaged at length in the context of how places and experiences are commodified (DeLyser 1999, Halewood and Hannam 2001, Gotham 2002, Prideaux 2003). Like Cohen, the work of Stroma Cole attempts to complicate the relationship between authenticity and commodification by questioning how authenticity is "articulated, by whom and for what purposes," opening up possibilities for empowerment of local communities (2007, 943). More recently, drawing on Jacques Lacan at the theoretical level, authenticity has been understood through the lens of "fantasy" (Knudsen et al 2016).). I focus on this latter theory of authenticity as fantasy, as it yields a fruitful analysis of Airbnb's tourism marketing and rhetoric.

2.1.2. Authenticity as "fantasy"

Translating MacCannell's well-worn theory of staged authenticity into psychoanalytic terms, Knudsen et al state that authenticity is a "fantasy" towards which we can strive but which we can never fully attain or satisfy (2016). The fantasy of authenticity begins with alienation, as in Rousseau's position that what destroys authenticity is society.[8] If "[alienation] is the result of humans being in society," Knudsen et al argue, then a *search* for authenticity is the pursuit of this tragic fantasy, driven by a desire to dis-alienate

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was now dedicated to the sale." During the course of the novel, Ignatius often alludes to the "lengthy indictment" against the current century, which he is writing and seems to be in a perpetual state of being written. For an academic to think too deeply about Ignatius – his erudite musings on needlessly esoteric philosophy, his conviction that we are generally living at the whims of "powerful agents hidden in the dark acting always consistently, continuously, relentlessly" (Latour 2004, 229), and his eternally in-progress manuscript that implores us to see the woes of the modern world – is to risk looking in a very dark mirror. And yet, Ignatius also represents a productive tension, reminding us, like Latour (2004) and Cohen (1988), to carefully examine complex issues without reducing them to "a lengthy indictment against our century." This is especially crucial, I think, for any critique of technology, and in this regard, I try to address Airbnb in New Orleans without treating the platform as some kind of mysterious, dark actor.

[8] Rousseau has been accused of contributing to the "noble savage" stereotype. While he never used the phrase itself, his attitude toward an objective and pure authenticity that exists before and is corrupted by society certainly gestures toward the idea of the noble savage.

(2016, 40). Pure and unfettered authenticity can be thought as a perfect whole that is always to be desired. However, as with any fantasy, "wholeness is impossible to attain" (Knudsen et al 2016, 40). In this way, authenticity is both fantasy and paradox, for the object of desire cannot be achieved. Following Lovell and Bull, "the closer we try to bring iconic [authentic] places, the more remote they can seem" (2017, 3) – and, perhaps, the more desirable they become. One drives down the curve of an asymptotic line, towards a target, ever shrinking but never fully closing "the gap" between the existing self and the authentic self.

Despite the futility of achieving that elusive thing called real, pure authenticity, we are impelled to "continue the 'search,'" which can take many forms (Knudsen et al 2016, 34). In "the search," capitalism is often times a motivating, if skulking and hidden, factor. Connecting authenticity to capitalist consumption and industrial production, Walter Benjamin offers the example of industrial-era mass-reproduction, which he argues was an attempt to satisfy the desire to "get closer" to an object's singularity, its "aura" (2008, 23). In Benjamin's formulation, the aura is a singular quality of an object for which there is "no facsimile" (2008, 31). For him, an object's authenticity is "the quintessence of all that is transmissible in it from its origin on" (22), and the attempt to mass-produce the quality of authenticity is "the social basis of the aura's present decay" (23). The aura produces "the unique apparition of distance, however near it may be," and Benjamin interprets mass-reproduction as the desire to "get closer" to the ever-distant auratic object.

Another manifestation of "the search" in today's world is tourism, and the "alienated modern tourist" who tries to reclaim a sense of authenticity as a "counterforce to the alienation of everyday life" (Knudsen et al 2016, 34). Alienation is of course productive for capitalism, and the tourism industry is no exception. If the "alienated modern tourist" were to actualize the fantasy of authenticity, they would have no reason to continue their search. In this way, capitalism must keep the tourist wanting, deferring the achievement of true authenticity in order to facilitate its (capitalism's) own reproduction. MacCannell explores this connection between authenticity and tourism, arguing that authenticity-seeking tourists are often met with a "staged authenticity," an

encounter that is manufactured or produced for the express purpose of seeming authentic (1973).

In a sort of contract between locals and capitalism, this staging of authenticity accomplishes two things. First, it works as a "managed commodification" that lets "local people retain control over their image" without giving tourists access to private, personal spaces (Lovell and Bull 2017, 5). Thus, even though locals must "stage" authenticity in order to preserve cultural products, they are at least afforded a degree of agency. Second, for tourists, since experiencing a "staged authenticity" is a partial but not whole fulfillment of the authentic fantasy, a staged authenticity leaves the tourist satisfied, and yet desiring more. If the real authentic experience, the "auratic" object illustrated by Benjamin, is still out there somewhere – and surely it *must* be out there somewhere – the tourist will continue to chase it. Unwittingly, they follow a trail of breadcrumbs, picking up little staged authenticities along the way but never obtaining The Real Thing. It keeps locals appeased and keeps capital moving.

Of course, "authenticity as fantasy" is mostly operational at the level of theory. Recalling Cohen's (1988) critique of MacCannell that tourists are not a homogenous group, there are mitigating factors of race, class, and gender at play, and furthermore, a tourist's subjectivity is not necessarily determined by the quest for authenticity. Not everybody can be troubled with (or be interested by) existential questions about an authentic self, and financially speaking, the leisure of tourism is not afforded to all. Those for whom tourism is available are sometimes confronted with unsettling experiences that make them question their own subjectivities as tourists. In June Jordan's essay about a trip to the Bahamas, for example, she details her discomfiting experience of being an affluent black woman who was waited on exclusively by people of color, and how that challenged her political sensibilities regarding solidarity (Jordan 1989). Elsewhere, Njabulo Ndebele has discussed his own "leisure colonialism" in the context of visiting game lodges, which are luxury rural accommodations in the South African bush (Ndebele 2007). Ndebele's case demonstrates a particular disruption of the touristic fantasy via raced and colonial bodies – where the author was looking for "relief from the accumulated stresses of everyday life," he found himself inextricably bound up in "the

relationship between the black leisure colonialist and the black worker"; found a reflection of himself in the "faceless black workers" (2007, 9-10).

Furthermore, the "fantasy" that a tourist desires may not always be authenticity, but something else entirely: the Disneyland tourist may be seeking simple, shameless, corporatized fun, and the cruise ship vacationer may just be out for relaxation and reprieve. Indeed, the Airbnb guest might truly and simply just be looking for a cheap trip. My goal in outlining this framework has not been to position authenticity as the sole motivating factor in the touristic consciousness, and even less to position the touristic consciousness as a primary analytical concern. Rather, I adopt a notion of "authenticity as fantasy" because it is particularly applicable in the case of Airbnb, which goes to great lengths in constructing certain fantasies through tourism and marketing rhetoric. In the following section, I detail the main ways in which the construction of the fantasy is accomplished.

2.1.3. Airbnb and the "construction of the fantasy itself"

Airbnb promulgates a fantasy of authenticity through two of its major slogans – "belong anywhere" and "live like a local" – a pair of experiential promises that are best exemplified by the Bélo and *Airbnbmag.* In 2014, Airbnb underwent a comprehensive rebranding campaign to cast itself as a lifestyle rather than "the second-coming of the hotel" (Kuang 2014). According to Brian Chesky, Airbnb co-founder and CEO, "belonging anywhere" was the "central emotion that informed the company's entire rebranding effort" (Carr 2014). The Bélo symbol, a visual synthesis of people, places, love, and Airbnb, exemplifies this ethos of universal belonging (see Figure 2.1). More recently, the company launched *Airbnbmag*, which Chesky says is for people "who believe, like us, that it's way more interesting to live like a local than travel like a tourist" (Chesky 2017). Flipping through the pages, a reader finds picturesque landscapes and seemingly candid moments of human experience, while articles discuss finding a "way beyond the guidebook" and how to "be at home in the world" (Figure 2.2). In particular, *Airbnbmag* takes out full-page advertisements for certain places and the unique experiences that they offer, including vacations for "When you need to unplug," "When

you need to reinvent yourself," and "When you need to find your inner warrior." New Orleans is among the featured cities, just a booking away "When you need to celebrate."

Figure 2.1: Bélo symbol

Figure 2.2: selected photos from *Airbnbmag*

A blurb at the bottom of the page reads: "You've gotten the job. The guy. The girl. New Orleans is made for rewarding yourself when life has finally gone right" (see Figure 2.2).

The magazine places great value on the locally unique and apparently authentic experiences possible through Airbnb. Even the Bélo's very name – its obscure etymology, its accentuated "e" – insinuates some kind of vague exoticism. Though we don't know exactly what it is or where it represents, we *do* know that it is far from the Silicon Valley of Airbnb's inception, and far from the everyday banality of Airbnb's ntended customer base. The Bélo is a kind of lost[9] object of desire, an empty signifier of belonging for no place in particular; the magazine, a tempting construction of what authentic experience is possible through Airbnb. Leaning on New Orleans' particular "repertoire of authenticity" (Gotham 2007, 20) – which includes symbols of jazz music, Cajun food, and partying – Airbnb produces a specific kind of desire or fantasy in New Orleans.

The author David Foster Wallace proves instructive in thinking through how the materials within *Airbnbmag* produce a certain fantasy. In an essay detailing his experiences during a 7-Night Caribbean (7NC) cruise, Wallace was particularly struck by the cruise company's advertising pamphlets and brochures. In these materials, the cruise line "uses the 2nd-person pronoun throughout" (Wallace 1997, 266). According to Wallace, "The brochure's real seduction is not an invitation to fantasize but rather a *construction of the fantasy itself*" (ibid, emphasis mine). He contrasts this with "regular advertising," in which "there's no sense of any real kind of actual promise being made." In the 7NC advertising materials, "you are excused from doing the work of constructing the fantasy. The ads do it for you" (1997, 266-267) – and so too does Airbnb. Elsewhere in his essay, Wallace writes, "All of the [cruise ship companies] offer the same basic product. This product is not a service or set of services. … It's more like a feeling. But it's also still a bona fide product – it's supposed to be produced in you, this feeling" (Wallace 1997, 260). The "feeling" that Wallace describes is a kind of affective experience, irreducible to either a set of services or emotions – it is an atmospheric, experiential sense of place, constituted in an assemblage among the crew, the customers,

[9] Recall that authenticity, as it has been philosophized pretty much dating back to its oft-cited Rousseauian formulation, is chiefly about recovering some abstract thing that has been lost.

the ship itself, the weather (or at least the *idea* of those things), and so on. This "feeling" is emblematic of the new mode of capitalism that Gilles Deleuze called "a capitalism not for *production* but for the *product*" (1992, 6), and will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter 6.

In some cases, Airbnb is conscious and transparent about how it constructs this fantasy. Airbnb's supporters have been described as expressing "enthusiasm that bordered on the cultish" (King 2016); as "almost cult-like in their adoration of the company" (Pickell 2017); and as encouraging a "highly decentralized approach to lobbying… where citizens merge with algorithms to neutralize any threat to their cult" (Bulajewski 2014). This sense of cultishness is no accident; Douglas Atkin, author of the 2004 book *The Culting of Brands: Turn Your Customers Into True Believers*, has recently served as Airbnb's "Global Head of Community and Mobilization." Part of Atkins' role in this position was to lead the rebranding effort that Airbnb underwent in 2014 to frame itself as a lifestyle brand instead of the second coming of the hotel. In his book, Atkins studied several cult brands (Apple, Harley-Davidson) as well as actual cults (Unification Church, Hare Krishna movement).[10] According to Bulajewski, Atkins' goal in the book was to "understand how cults recruit and maintain members, hoping to teach the tricks of the trade to marketers to inspire the same kind of fierce loyalty, religious devotion and vibrant community around their brands" (Bulajewski 2014). It should come as no surprise that Atkins was the man charged with the project of developing the Bélo.

Many of Airbnb's users do not necessarily espouse the ethos of sharing. A wealth of get-rich-quick books, which can be found for purchase on Amazon, suggest that a significant number of Airbnb hosts operate in contrast to the company's discourses of sharing. The covers of these books depict houses built from dollar bills, suggesting that the home is a latent moneymaking machine (see Figure 2.3), while titles like *Get Paid For Your Pad* and *The Airbnb Profit Blueprint* promise a fast path to cash: "If you have a home and an internet connection your solution is Airbnb" (Ribbers and Kapadia 2017).

[10] Obviously, "cult" is a term I'm borrowing from Bulajewski here, and I'm less concerned with debating what constitutes a "cult" than I am the concept of "cult brands." As an aside, these cult-branded products and services can manifest in ways that are particularly *geographic*, as in the heated debate, primarily located in Pennsylvania, Maryland, and Virginia, over which regional convenience store is better, Wawa or Sheetz – a debate within which a certain author finds himself holding a voracious and unswayable opinion, bordering on the cultish, in the defense of Wawa.

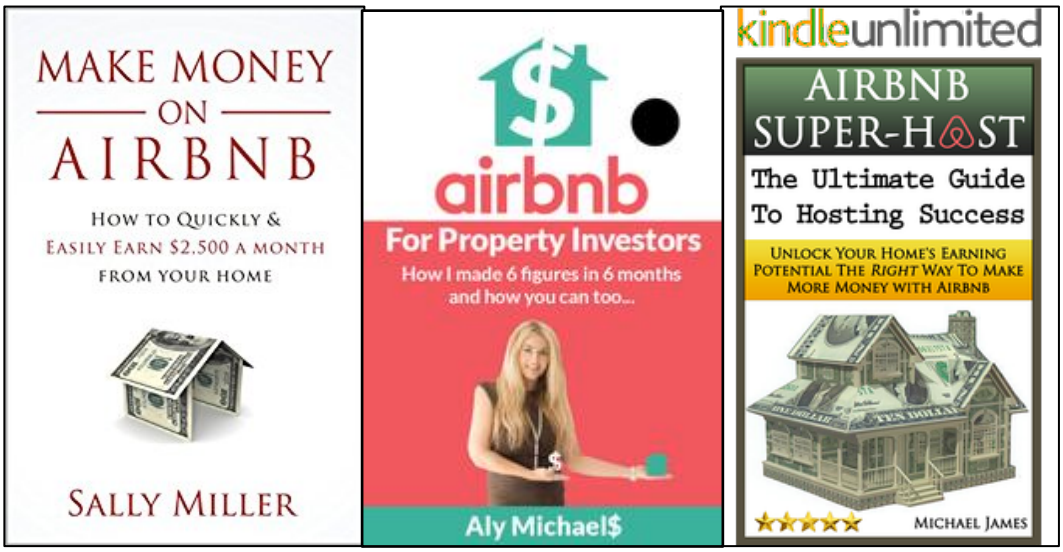

Figure 2.3: Selected get-rich-quick books from Airbnb entrepreneurs Sally Miller, Michael James, and Aly Michael$

More recently, a company called Loftium has promised to provide up to $50,000 toward the down payment on a home, under the condition that said homeowner lists their new place on Airbnb for one to three years – giving Loftium most of the profits along the way (Bernard 2017). Here, Airbnb is not seen as a lifestyle brand or a platform for sharing, but rather a mechanism for fiscal accumulation.

In summation, I argue that while authenticity is a tenuous and constructed thing – and far from universal in how it is experience and desired – it can be deployed in certain ways and in certain interests. Airbnb's construction of authenticity as a type of fantasy is an excellent example of the mechanisms through which authenticity is constructed. To once again recall Cohen's critique of authenticity, this seems a decent moment to ask: Who cares? Surely if users of Airbnb find these experiences valuable and "authentic," they are in the right to experience them as such? I do not dispute Cohen's point that commodification "does not necessarily destroy the meaning of cultural products," nor that tourists tend to hold a "looser" concept of what constitutes authenticity (Cohen 1988, 383). What I am more interested in, and what Cohen does not provide the framework to address, is the spillover that occurs as a result of the economic interaction between Airbnb, a guest, and a host. How do certain processes spill over beyond this trifold relationship? How might other actors and spaces be enrolled into Airbnb's project?

To this end, Bruner (1994) has eloquently identified the theoretical pivot one must make. Writing about the shortcomings of authenticity as an analytic framework, he

argues, "The concept of *authority* serves as a corrective to misuses of the term *authenticity*, because in raising the issue of who authenticates, the nature of the discussion is changed" (1994, 408). In other words, it is less a question of *how authentic* something is than who has *authority to authenticate* that thing.

The "fantasy" towards which platforms like Airbnb gesture is just that – a fantasy, an illusion. The idea of The Real Thing is relevant, but The Real Thing itself is not: "The vocabulary of origins and reproductions [of authenticity] and the inauthentic may not adequately acknowledge that both are constructions of the present" (Bruner 1994, 409). Structures of power and authority must be at the core of the conversation. In the next section, I situate Airbnb more broadly in the landscape of neoliberal urban governance and argue that authenticity's commodification works as a cultural form of power over space to enact a neoliberal place-making agenda (Zukin 2010, Harvey 1989).

2.2. The neoliberal city: from urban entrepreneurialism to micro-entrepreneurialism of the self

> "There are laws for people and there are laws for business, but you are a new category, a third category, people as businesses… as hosts, you are micro-entrepreneurs, and there are no laws written for micro-entrepreneurs."
>
> -Brian Chesky, CEO, Airbnb

> "Apparently, I lack some particular perversion which today's employer is seeking."
>
> -Ignatius J. Reilly, *A Confederacy of Dunces*

Cities have long tried to make themselves attractive for outside investment, but David Harvey argues that the 1970s represented a shift in techniques to what he calls the "entrepreneurial city" (1989). In Harvey's framework, this "shift" came in response to "widespread erosion of the economic and fiscal base of many large cities in the advanced capitalist world," from a managerial form of urban governance to an entrepreneurial one (Harvey 1989, 4). This new urban entrepreneurialism was mainly evidenced by three interlocking characteristics: the 1) notion of public-private partnerships, 2) the transferal of risk from private to public sector, and 3) the construction of an urban identity through the "political economy of place rather than of territory" (Harvey 1989, 7). Specifically, the state's assumption of risk entailed by private investment is a key departure from the

traditional civic boosterism that came before urban entrepreneurialism (Roberts and Schein 1993, 22).

Harvey's idea of the entrepreneurial city has been used in a number of urban studies including an examination of the political-economic landscape in Syracuse, NY (Roberts and Schein 1993), and the development of a theory of the "revanchist city" (Smith 1996; MacLeod 2002). Most recently, Harvey's argument has been broadly enrolled in a larger modality of neoliberalism as urban governance (Brenner and Theodore 2005). Andrew Wood notes that Harvey's concept, despite quickly becoming a citation classic, is mostly engaged as a *conceptual preface* rather than as a "*framework for* the study of particular processes or phenomena" (1998, 122; emphasis original). By this, Wood means that scholars tend to utilize Harvey's article to simply introduce their research issue rather than use Harvey's "entrepreneurial city" as a theoretical underpinning. Of course, as Harvey himself is quick to state, this theory was embedded in a particular historical moment during which urban governments were, as a response to economic changes in global capitalism in the 1960s and '70s, consciously making themselves "more innovative and entrepreneurial" in their pursuit of attracting capital (1989, 4). With this in mind, my engagement seeks to "elaborate further Harvey's initial formulation" so as to account for contemporary social and economic relations (Wood 1998, 120). Specifically, I argue that Airbnb is part of a broader shift in the scale of the entrepreneurial city, from more formal business-state partnerships to more casual business-individual groupings, which are loosely captured by the so-called sharing economy. In other words, Airbnb represents a form of urban governance in which 1) many more actors mediate public-private partnerships; 2) place-making strategies occur at the realm of the individual; and 3) labor practices are rendered more individually precarious while being simultaneously framed as inclusive and liberatory.

This history of New Orleans fits quite well to the theory of the entrepreneurial city. The shrinking residential population, the spike in conventions/convention centers, and the proliferation of hotel rooms, which occurred between 1960 and 2000, were all signs of the city's shift to entrepreneurial governance. In New Orleans, tourism was the primary technique for attracting capital. Gotham (2005) has coined the term "tourism gentrification" to describe the practice of "importing spending and exporting the tax

burden to generate revenue to facilitate urban redevelopment and spending." He uses the example of New Orleans' French Quarter to describe how "corporate entertainment firms and retail chains are plugged into global financial circuits to leverage capital to redevelop residential and commercial space." Gotham's 2007 *Authentic New Orleans* speaks more overtly to the imbrications of authenticity and gentrification in the production of urban identity. He uses the term "urban branding" to describe the process of transforming mundane symbols into evocative signs of place in order to draw tourism investment (2007, 136).

Gotham's (2005) assessment of tourism gentrification must be revisited to account for the current state of tourism and labor in New Orleans. Since 2008, Airbnb has become a popular platform for short-term lodging, functioning both as an alternative to and a complement of the hotel market. There are roughly 40,000 hotel rooms and 283 hotels in New Orleans (Evans 2016). In comparison, as of June 2017, there were 5,307 Airbnb listings in the city – 75% of which are whole-home rentals – from 3,392 unique hosts (according to InsideAirbnb.com). Although some would argue that Airbnb is not "disruptive" to the hotel industry, the fact that Airbnb commands around 12% of short-term lodging options in city begs to differ (see also Guttentag 2015, Guttentag and Smith 2017). As demonstrated in Figure 5, the spatialization of Airbnb listings (i.e., hotels can only occupy 283 brick-and-mortar spaces, while Airbnb rentals are more fluid) – represents a new development in how the temporalities and spatialities of tourism unfold in the urban fabric of New Orleans.

Importantly, through platforms like Airbnb, individuals are increasingly encouraged to "develop [their] personalities as brands" and "endeavor to generate social, public, and professional value by acting as both *micro-entrepreneurs* and *micro-entrepreneurs of [their] own selves and lives*" (Hall 2016, 59-60). Gary Hall has called this "micro-entrepreneurialism of the self," but the finest articulation comes from Airbnb CEO Brian Chesky, as shown in the epigraph to this section. During a meeting in 2013, Chesky declared to an audience of hosts, "There are laws for people and there are laws for business, but you are a new category, a third category, people as businesses… as hosts, you are micro-entrepreneurs, and there are no laws written for micro-entrepreneurs" (Davidson and Infranca 2016, 242-243). Airbnb is a platform that

facilitates capital to commodify "extra rooms in a house," but also the "entrepreneurial affect" of a host (Cockayne 2016c). The swing toward micro-entrepreneurialism is individuals becoming ambassadors not just of their selves, but of the city as a whole, thus becoming enrolled in the larger place-making neoliberal project of attracting capital through affective attachment (i.e., leveraging authenticity).

We see less of a "shift away from many small groups and individuals toward a more transnational corporate influence" (Gotham 2005, 1114), or "place-specific projects" like Southstreet Seaport that operate at a metropolitan scale (Harvey 1989, 7-8); rather, the micro-entrepreneurial city represents a return to the individual, and a construction of an urban identity that is facilitated through a new and more nebulous incarnation of the public-private partnership: "city governments as agents of business-friendly and market-driven reforms will be supplanted by individuals and households that have internalised these very processes in their everyday lives and spaces" (Stabrowski 2017, 341). According to Filip Starbrowksi, this new "urban micro-entrepreneurialism" functions as "a way for cash-strapped local governments to meet their environmental and economic needs and obligations by fundamentally reframing the socio-spatial relations of urban housing" (2017, 341). Through its adoption of soft short-term rental (STR) regulations,[11] New Orleans has tacitly endorsed the tenets of the micro-entrepreneurial city: a contemporary extension of Harvey (1989) and Gotham's (2005) work that accounts for the hyper-individualization of urban entrepreneurialism, incurred and enabled by new digital technologies.

A post-Airbnb urban landscape sees the effects of tourism gentrification creep steadily beyond the confines of the Vieux Carré and into residential spaces and the previously non-commodified spatial practices of "sharing" economies. This type of commodification signals a departure from how Lovell and Bull view "staged authenticity," in which they see the act of staging as retaining a degree of local agency over tourists' access to private "back regions." Hall's view of micro-entrepreneurialism is consistent with other analyses of the "sharing" economy," and in particular the work of Lizzie Richardson, who argues that the sharing economy hides behind its own complex

[11] In December 2016, New Orleans passed a series of STR regulations that legalized STR's across the city with flexible renting conditions and inexpensive licenses for hosts. More details will be discussed in Chapter 4.

articulation in order to paradoxically frame itself as both an alternative to and an entrenchment of neoliberal capitalism (Richardson 2015, 121; see also Frenken and Schor 2017, Cockayne 2016a, and Martin 2016). Following Cockayne (2016a), I see the on-demand economic practices of Airbnb as being enrolled within a larger neoliberal project.

In order to sustain itself, New Orleans must continuously reproduce and re-perform its own "staged authenticity" – sometimes shifting tourism consumption to new and more authentic locations – as it conforms to the urban image that has been meticulously crafted in order to attract capital (MacCannell 1973). The city is tourism-dependent, and "the selling of the city as a location for activity depends heavily upon the creation of an attractive urban imaginary" (Harvey 1989, 13). Airbnb is an amplifying factor in how this urban imaginary is produced; indeed, what Harvey is gesturing toward, but never explicitly stating, is the idea of a fantasy achievable through tourism. What I am suggesting, in addition to constructing a particular fantasy, is that Airbnb opens a convenient "wormhole" (Sheppard 2002), one that bypasses the corporatized, Disneyfied French Quarter and digitally slingshots tourists directly into back regions. As such, platforms like Airbnb both *proliferate* the construction of an urban image, and *privatize* that which used to be public or public-private. "The circus succeeds," Harvey writes, "even if the bread is lacking. The triumph of image over substance is complete" (1989, 14). In this moment, Harvey is situating authenticity (image, circus) in dialectic with collective prosperity (bread, substance), suggesting that the "political and social consequences" of overvaluing metropolitan projects "population at large" (Harvey 1989, 14).

In conclusion, I have demonstrated that Harvey's original formulation of the entrepreneurial city can be usefully extended to account for micro-entrepreneurial economic activity that is facilitated through digital on-demand platforms. It has focused mainly, however, on 1) the labor that contract workers (i.e., Airbnb hosts) perform in the gig-economy, and 2) regional-scale discussions about urban neoliberal governance. A key part of my argument is the need to better understand the enrollments and spillovers that occur beyond the formal contractual relationship between a guest, a host, and Airbnb. In order to do so, I turn to feminist political economy. Drawing in particular on three perspectives – diverse economies, social reproduction, and emotional labor – I attempt to

complicate the hegemony of global neoliberal capitalist discourse, and in doing so, foster an analytical framework that opens space for discussion about alternative modes of labor and of *enrollment* into modes of labor.

2.3. Feminist political economy: diverse economies and emotional labor

> "If Rousseau could sign on as a flight attendant for Delta Airlines in the second half of the twentieth century, he would doubtless be interested in learning just *whose* capital a worker's feelings are and just *who* is putting this capital to work."
>
> -Arlie Russell Hochschild, *The Managed Heart* (1983, 185)

Harvey's theory of the "entrepreneurial city" is useful for thinking at the regional unit, but of course, the city is scaled; it contains multitudes – *is* multitudes – and those multitudes do not render a singularity but rather a "gathering process" that "actually *takes place*" and is always "*assembling*" (McFarlane 2011, 650-651). The theoretical lines of flight that can be drawn from Harvey's argument only spread so far before they are stunted by the singular language of "the city," "the state," and so on. In order to broaden the theoretical scope of the entrepreneurial city, I put Harvey in conversation with select literature in feminist political economy. Feminist political economy, a grouping of theories "proliferating at the margins of political, urban, and economic geography," seeks to challenge "terms of injustice and [highlight] the inseparability of difference from the economic" (Werner et al 2017, 3). Such theories range from conceptualizations of emotional labor to the work of social reproduction. J.K. Gibson-Graham's *The End of Capitalism* (2006), an epistemological assault on the discourse of capitalist hegemony in the US, was a milestone text in this field and identified a key tension in how contemporary scholars were theoretically approaching and discussing capitalism.

At its core, *The End of Capitalism* is a hopeful text. Its central argument is that capitalism has been theorized as having far too much dominance. Gibson-Graham argue that resistance to capitalism begins at the level of discourse; that perceived hegemony is not internal to capitalism itself, but rather a "social articulation" that is "only temporarily fixed"; and that "alternative economic discourses become the sites and instruments of struggles that may subvert capitalism's provisional and unstable dominance" (2006, 15). In addition to serving as a counterpoint to Harvey's pointedly more pessimistic vision

toward the machinery of capitalism, Gibson-Graham open up different possibilities for viewing how – and, in reference to the epigraph above, *for whom* – bodies are enrolled into different kinds of labor. Instead of treating capitalism as a social relation without an outside, Gibson-Graham attempt to "open up an imaginative space for economic alternatives at a point when they seemed entirely absent" (2008, 1). They are careful "not to enlarge capitalism by conflating it with commodity production or market activity more generally" (2006, xxiv). Specifically outlining theories of diverse economies (Gibson-Graham 2008) and emotional labor (Hochschild 1983), this section sets a foundation for thinking about how different actors are situated inside and outside of the gig-economy.

2.3.1. Diverse economies

While capitalism can feel like a stifling and all encompassing force in geographic scholarship, Gibson-Graham argue that this is partially due to the discipline's overwhelming emphasis on "neoliberalism and neoliberal capitalist globalization" (2008, 7). For them, capitalism is no different than alternative economic imaginaries, in that any kind of economic system – capitalist or otherwise – is "performatively enacted" through forms of scholarship, knowledge production, and practice (2008, 7; see also Callon 2002). In part, capitalism is called forth into being by its given dominance in discourse. Gibson-Graham see a variety of already existing economic realities that function partially within or even entirely outside of capitalism (see Table 2). The authors note that in reality, "non-market transactions and unpaid household work (both by definition non-capitalist) constitute 30%-50% of economic activity in both rich and poor countries" (2008, 3). In turn, Gibson-Graham argue that an overemphasis on the totality of capitalism undercuts the validity of other economic activities, and as a result, shortchanges the potential for other alternatives to manifest.

Of particular note in Table 2 are the "Non-market" and "Unpaid" economic activities, which have various forms of remuneration (and sometimes none at all). Importantly, the difference in remuneration often breaks down along gendered lines. Writing about women's "unpaid involuntary domestic labor," Nona Glazer argues that the capitalist state appropriates and exploits women's unwaged, private work as

Table 2.1: A Diverse Economy (adapted from Gibson-Graham 2008)		
Transactions	**Labor**	**Enterprise**
MARKET	*WAGE*	*CAPITALIST*
ALTERNATIVE MARKET Sale of public goods Ethical 'fair-trade' markets Local trading systems Alternative currencies Underground market Co-op exchange Barter Informal market	*ALTERNATIVE PAID* Self-employed Cooperative Indentured Reciprocal labor In kind Work for welfare	*ALTERNATIVE CAPITALIST* State enterprise Green capitalist Socially responsible firm Non-profit
NON-MARKET Household flows Gift giving Indigenous exchange State allocations State appropriations Gleaning Hunting, fishing, gathering Theft, poaching	*UNPAID* Housework Family care Neighborhood work Volunteer Self-provisioning labor Slave labor	*NON-CAPITALIST* Communal Independent Feudal Slave

producers and as consumers (1984). Elsewhere, Isabel Dyck has described how women's "care in the 'community' supports the goals of the nation state," ultimately arguing that women are forced to absorb the labor of care that makes neoliberalism (and capitalism more broadly) possible (2005, 242). Indeed, the home is the site of what Silvia Federici calls the "devaluation of women's labor" (Federici 2004, 92). She writes that "all female work, if done in the home, was defined as 'housekeeping,' and even when done outside of the home it was paid less than a man's work" (94) – and, while it is called "housework," this is also true in Gibson-Graham's formulation. The care work of social reproduction had to be extracted for free if capitalism was to reproduce itself, and in Western capitalist states, the burden of that work was borne by women. Gillian Rose further argues that domestic space and homeliness are "not bounded by the walls of the house" (2010, 42). As such, women's labor can be devalued anywhere, anytime, treated as a "natural resource, available to all, no less than the air we breathe or the water we drink… laying outside the sphere of market relations" (Federici 2004, 97). Here, alternative economic practices are still seen in *relation to* capitalism as a dominant form (i.e., their capacity to be extracted or enrolled into capitalist relations); however, it opens

up a conversation for understanding capitalism as a contingent system of practice instead of a "transcendental given" (Gibson-Graham 2008, 9).

What this suggests is that women's unpaid labor is not just *part* of capitalism, but in fact is *essential* to its reproduction. For example, a 2018 study from the United Nations found that women across the world are still doing 2.6 times the unpaid domestic labor that men perform. According to Shahra Razavi, the UN Women Chief of Research and Data, "If women stopped doing a lot of the work they do unpaid, then the whole economy would collapse" (Carpenter 2018). In her book *Fortunes of Feminism*, Nancy Fraser extends this position, arguing that the current post-industrial phase of capitalism is inextricably tied to a shifting gender order of work. Fraser classifies the industrial phase of capitalism as predicated on a gender order of the "family wage," in which "people were supposed to be organized into heterosexual, male-headed nuclear families, which lived principally from the man's labor market earnings" (2013, 111). In this model, the work of social reproduction – as outlined by Glazer, Federici, and Dyck – fell to women's domestic unpaid labor. According to Fraser, as a result of new gender relations in post-industrial capitalism where families are less conventional and more diverse, "a new world of economic production and social reproduction is emerging – a world of less stable employment" (Fraser 2013, 113). Importantly, the rise of on-demand economic platforms and the shifting gender order are not unrelated; on the contrary, they must be understood as co-constitutive of another. Digital on-demand platforms have in part gained popularity for their promises of flexible work, which – since "flexible work" functionally translates to "independently contracted" – are often more precarious by design. In other words, digital on-demand work fits snugly within Fraser's framework for the imbrications of gender and post-industrial capitalism.

2.3.2. Emotional labor

The diverse economies model, as well as work on social reproduction and the unremunerated extraction of women's labor, demonstrates the abundance of economic modalities that exist within, nearby, or outside of capitalism. Absent from Gibson-Graham's formulation of a diverse economy, however, is emotional labor. As theorized

by Arlie Russell Hochschild, emotional labor is the management of personal feeling: it "requires one to induce or suppress feeling in order to sustain the outward countenance that produces the proper state of mind in others" (1983, 7).[12] Hochschild, in her classic case study of flight attendants at Delta Airlines, details how "private emotion has been subordinated to commercial logic" in the interest of extracting profit (185). Emotional labor runs the risk of "[estranging] workers from their own smiles" by intervening the pursuit of profit between the "smiler and the smiled upon" (1983, 5). For Hochschild, then, it is not emotional labor itself but rather its "underlying system of recompense that raises the question of what the cost of it is" (11). Instead of condemning the notion of emotional labor outright, she is concerned with its capacity to be exploited, and the harmful implications for workers that could entail. This exploitation particularly affects women, who participate in a disproportionate amount of service-based, emotionally demanding labor (both within and beyond the workplace proper). Emotional labor can have physical consequences, too: emotional overwork may lead to "burnout, stress, [and] physical collapse" (Hochschild 1983, 202). At its most insidious, the costs of emotional labor to the worker are deeply psychological – but the value, at least for capitalism, is tough to beat (186-187).

Where Hochschild articulates how emotional labor affects the service worker, Robin Leidner has shown how emotional labor affects the service recipient. Drawing on her participant observation research at McDonald's, Leidner writes that non-employee service recipients "are part of the work process. They are not simply observers; they are generally coproducers of the interaction, whose cooperation is required for the work to go forward" (1999, 83). Indeed, "service workers must expend emotional labor to produce a certain quality of interaction but also manage the emotions of service recipients" in order to keep the work moving (83). Outside of her research on McDonald's, Leidner also points out that these interactions are necessarily gendered. When writing scripts for their workers to use, employers would make assumptions about "how men and women should behave" (Leidner 1991, 156). In turn, the scripts would reproduce a certain gender order

[12] While I rely mainly on Hochschild here, Steinberg and Figart (1999) and Grandey (2000) have also reflected more broadly on emotional labor, attempting to extend Hochschild's initial formulation with their own typologies.

– and its attendant relations of power – that the employer felt would make the transaction go smoothly. While my research does not have a particular emphasis on gender, it does deal explicitly with the unremunerated extraction of surplus value from the emotional labor of people outside a formal contractual relationship – a format consistent with capitalism's unremunerated extraction of women's labor – and a process that I explore in detail during Chapters 5 and 6.

The scripts were an example of what Leidner calls the routinization of work, or the techniques for "reducing unpredictability" and producing the appropriate type of interaction between employees and service recipients (31). In her study, Leidner also describes how Amway Corporation, a multi-level marketing company whose distributors are responsible for both selling their wares and recruiting more distributors, tries to control the behavior of its workers. According to Leidner, "There is no part of distributors' lives that Amway does not see as relevant to the success of the business" (1993, 38). This might involve the attempted manipulation of the political beliefs, family lives, or religious convictions of Amway's employees. For example, "[Amway] encourages distributors to break off ties with friends or relatives who are critical of Amway" (1993, 38). Otherwise, companies might arrange for "the compliance of non-employees" by installing uncomfortable seating and garish colors or "concealing or infusing [routinization] with some semblance of authenticity" (1993, 31-32). In any case, such interactive service work demonstrates how "it is impossible to draw clear distinctions between the worker, the work process, and the product or outcome, because the quality of the interaction is frequently part of the service being delivered" (1999, 83).

David Foster Wallace provides a useful articulation of emotional labor in his essay about the 7-Night Caribbean Cruise (7NC). During his week on the ship, he observed the management of emotion writes that he was "the object of over 1,500 professional smiles" (1997, 257). For Wallace, the luxury cruise and its concomitant pampering – its "structured fun" (261) – led him to feel a sense of dread and despair because it laid bare the incongruities of the crew's emotional self-presentation; to paraphrase Lionel Trilling, Wallace was made aware the great distance between their avowal and their actual feeling (Trilling 1972). Similarly to Hochschild, Wallace defines the "Professional Smile" as "the smile that doesn't quite reach the smiler's eyes and that

signifies nothing more than a calculated attempt to advance the smiler's own interests by pretending to like the smilee" (289). Furthermore, like Hochschild and Leidner, Wallace understands that the threat of all this is that the smiler's "own interests" and "calculations" are imbricated with those of corporate capital. Like the flight hostesses of Hochschild's ethnography, these crewmembers' smiles were "*on* them but not *of* them" (1983, 8; emphasis original). Rather than cast a negative light on cruise ship workers or McDonald's employees, what this demonstrates is the power of capital to intervene in the management of personal emotion.

In this section, I have drawn on feminist scholarship in political economy to articulate capitalism as a tenuous social force – a powerful one, to be sure, but one that has been constructed under conditional circumstances and has exploited certain types of (gendered) labor in order to reproduce itself. Gibson-Graham are instructive in understanding the various forms that labor and work can take form in a diverse economy, one such being emotional labor. However, while the examples of cruise ships, Amway, Delta, and McDonald's provide the foundation for a working theory of emotional labor, they must be revised to examine a platform like Airbnb. In the cases of Uber, Wikipedia, and Facebook, some scholars have written about digital technologies and emotional labor (Rosenblat and Stark 2016, Arcy 2016, Menking and Erickson 2015, Raval and Dourish 2016), but the scholarship remains limited. Since digital technologies have the power to extend the working day, intensify working practices, and render the "boundaries of the workplace emergent" (Richardson 2016, 1), it is imperative to understand how people are finding themselves variously enrolled into digital platforms. Furthermore, recalling Gary Hall's point that in a micro-entrepreneurial working environment, individuals must develop their own personalities as brands in order to generate value, emotion work and the management of feeling takes on a new kind of importance. In the following section, I seek to complicate Gibson-Graham's attitude toward dismantling capitalism at the level of discourse (2006) by discussing how contemporary gig-economy practices through Airbnb are discursively "framed as both part of the capitalist economy and as an alternative" to it (Richardson 2015).

2.4. Digital geographies of on-demand economic practice

As outlined in the previous section, in Gibson-Graham's project, resistance to the hegemony of capitalism begins at the level of discourse. Doreen Massey echoes this point, arguing, "The existing vocabulary is one of the roots of the elite's ability to maintain the horrible straitjacket we are in" (Massey 2013, 18). But what happens when, rather than destabilizing capitalism's "presumptive hegemony" as Gibson-Graham suggest it does, a "discourse of economic plurality" actually *solidifies* capitalism's authority and hegemony? (Gibson-Graham 2006, 15) Drawing on the work of Lizzie Richardson (2015) and Daniel Cockayne (2016a, 2016b, 2016c), I take up authenticity as a point of entry into theorizing on-demand labor practices. After discussing how digital spatial media has been theorized in geographic scholarship, I argue that current understandings of the side effects of on-demand economic practices fall short in the realm of their effects on communities in which they operate.

We can think of the on-demand economy as a constellation of digital platforms acting as mediators between a service provider and a service recipient. Since most on-demand economic practices depend on some kind of spatial relation, they tend to occur in urban spaces (Davidson and Infranca 2016), and are facilitated by and large through spatial media (i.e., ride-hailing services like Lyft and Uber would effectively become ride-failing services if there were not a clever algorithm to match a driver to a physically near passenger). These platforms did not emerge suddenly from the ether, but are instead situated in a longer genealogy of what has been called "new spatial media" (Crampton 2009, Elwood and Leszczynski 2013, 2015). Elwood and Leszczynski define new spatial media as channels that "enable, extend, or enhance our ability to interact with and create geographic information online" (2013, 544). Such interactions – which range from the generation of geocoded content on Yelp to the hailing of an Uber on a crowded street or the rental of an Airbnb listing in a neighborhood off the beaten path – have the capacity to produce "augmented realities" (Graham et al 2013) and a certain kind of "coded space" (Kitchin and Dodge 2011).

Airbnb is generally accepted as part of the on-demand economy. However, there is a significant amount of debate over how to draw the boundaries of the on-demand economy, and what kinds of platforms even constitute on-demand economic practice.

While the terms are sometimes used interchangeably, it is important to first dispel the conflation between the on-demand economy and the "sharing" economy. Services that are afforded inclusion to the "sharing" economy tend to be recently established (since 2005); tend to operate through digital or online platforms; and emphasize the values of access over ownership, sustainable consumption, and trust between strangers. These criteria cast a wide net, and as such, the boundaries of the "sharing" economy tend to be fairly fluid. Financial technologies like Bitcoin, transportation services like Zipcar and Bikeshare, and barter marketplaces like TaskRabbit are sometimes included beneath, and other times excluded from, the umbrella of the "sharing" economy (Frenken and Schor 2017).

The tension here, of course, is that many of the platforms afforded inclusion have little or nothing to do with sharing. Sometimes the "sharing" economy appears as a "collection of innovations seemingly connected only by a common use of digital technologies" (Martin 2016, 158). This broad inclusion of platforms and services in the "sharing" economy is likely descended from a discursive tradition that linked sharing practices to digital technologies. The early 2000's witnessed a "growing phenomenon of citizens freely sharing skills and knowledge in collaborative online endeavors," as in platforms like Wikipedia and practices like volunteered geographic information (Martin 2016, 151; Goodchild 2007). Some of the current on-demand platforms, like Couchsurfing and TaskRabbit,[13] are more closely aligned to the ethos of "sharing," but in the case of Airbnb, "sharing" practices are only nominally so; the platform does not facilitate any kind of sharing but rather a short-term rental contract between willing participants.

The sharing economy has been theorized as a deepening entrenchment of neoliberal capitalism masquerading as collaborative and sustainable consumption. Indeed, sharing is still predicated on "private ownership and the possibility of capitalist exchange" (Cockayne 2016a): "home sharing" manifests as a short-term rental lease, and

[13] Bitcoin is a decentralized blockchain-based currency. Couchsurfing is a hospitality service platform that allows its members to arrange free homestays, and TaskRabbit is a digital marketplace for matching freelance labor with local demand. Zipcar and Bikeshare are short-term rental services for bikes and cars. While these platforms range from rental services to gift- or barter-based exchange systems, and thus some are more closely align with the "sharing" economy than ride-hailing or home-rental platforms, Bitcoin is currently the only non-profit service (which rings slightly ironic, considering a single Bitcoin is at this writing valued in the neighborhood of $10,000, and is becoming less a "currency" than a speculative asset).

"micro-entrepreneurialism" is another way of saying contract work. Building on Gibson-Graham and others, Daniel Cockayne has eloquently argued that there is a fundamental co-constitution between the *discourse* of sharing and the *embodied labor practices* to which sharing refers. While those two things are not interchangeable, "sharing as a discursive formation is not incidental to economic practice, but instead contributes to its very constitution and performance" (2016a, 74). Cockayne argues that sharing discourses create affective attachments to, and thus normalize, precarious forms of work. This is the moment that I hold in tension with Gibson-Graham's hopeful imaginary for a post-capitalist future, for if resistance to capitalism begins at the level of discourse, but alternative discourses of capitalism (i.e., "sharing") can be so easily co-opted for capitalist ends, it is unclear how one might proceed.

Indeed, platforms like Airbnb are sometimes framed as part of the sharing economy, which allows them to claim the "positive symbolic value of sharing" (Frenken and Schor 2017, 2). The book *What's Mine is Yours*, which outlined a vision for what the authors termed "collaborative consumption" through on-demand economic practice, was a rallying point for early sharing economy enthusiasts (Botsman and Rogers 2010a). By giving people "the benefits of ownership with reduced personal burden and cost and also lower environmental impact," the authors argued that on-demand services would usher in a kind of socioeconomic revolution in "the way people fulfill their needs" (Botsman and Rogers 2010b). The most recognizable actors in the on-demand economy, Airbnb and Uber, were respectively founded in 2008 and 2009, and as such they were framed *ex post facto* as part of the "sharing economy."

While it is tempting to continue critiquing Airbnb and its cohorts for their desire to occupy a seat at the table of "sharing" platforms, it is becoming unclear the degree to which platforms like Airbnb and Uber are actually claiming the label, and furthermore, whether "sharing" discourse remains a valuable avenue of critique. To complicate "sharing" as an economic style is increasingly a mainstream subject, and "sharing" as a classificatory term seems to be losing its popularity. Indeed, Tom Slee has already published the second edition of his monograph-length critique of "sharing" platforms, and many national newspaper publications and magazines – including *The New York Times, Forbes, Huffington Post*, *Business Insider*, and *The New Yorker* – have run stories

questioning the "sharing" economy's efficacy and its ostensible benefits. In those cases, it is usually the publication that applies the "sharing" label to platforms like Lyft and Airbnb.

To be sure, it could be that the notion of "sharing" is so deeply entrenched in popular understandings of Airbnb or Lyft that such platforms no longer need to cast themselves as such in order to confer the benefits of "sharing." However, it is increasingly unclear whether "sharing economy" is still, as Cockayne writes, the "more popular term" for gig or on-demand economy (Cockayne 2016a). It certainly was as of 2016, when Chris Martin analyzed how 75 randomly selected newspaper articles (from a database of around 225) were "framing" different P2P marketplaces and on-demand platforms. However, a more recent article from *The Atlantic* that critically examines the side effects of Airbnb never uses the phrase "sharing economy" (Thomas 2018). It is growing more popular to simply call it what it is – a short-term home rental marketplace – and calls into question whether the phrase "sharing economy" is becoming primarily used by critics of the "sharing economy" to criticize platforms for their desire to be part of the "sharing economy." Especially in the case of Airbnb, as I have detailed in previous sections, I find it more productive to consider their particular discourses from the vantage point of "authenticity" than of "sharing."

In this chapter, I have built up a series of literatures toward a framework that can be used to explore Airbnb in New Orleans. After establishing the notion of authenticity as a touristic fantasy – and specifically, the discourses of authenticity that Airbnb uses in its marketing rhetoric – I argued that Airbnb is situated within a development from Harvey's (1989) conception of an entrepreneurial city into the "micro-entrepreneurial" city (Gotham 2005, Hall 2016, Stabrowski 2017). I then reviewed literature in feminist political economy, particularly on diverse economies and emotional labor, in order to complicate the hegemony of neoliberal capitalist discourse. Finally, I detailed how the cooptation of "sharing" discourse for capitalist ends problematizes discourse as a lever for resistance to capitalism. In short, what this set of literature builds toward is an analysis of Airbnb as a digital platform that takes into account the broader structures of urban neoliberal place-making, particularly through new strategies of micro-

entrepreneurialism, as well as more diverse interpretations of economic activity. In the following chapter, I detail my methods in conducting this analysis.

CHAPTER 3.
METHODOLOGY, DATA, AND BACKGROUND

Despite its infancy, Airbnb has received a good amount of academic attention to date, and especially so in the past three years. Studies of the platform have included meditations on its future (Guttentag 2015); attempts to discern guests' motivations (Stors and Kagermeier 2015, Brochado et al 2017, Bae et al 2017); forms of discourse or content analysis (Stabrowski 2017); and various papers or reports using quantitative methods as the main analytical technique (Byers et al 2013, Zervas et al 2015, Edelman et al 2016, Ert et al 2016, Guttentag et al 2017, Liang et al 2017, Lee 2017, Gutiérrez et al 2017, Barron et al 2017, Wang and Nicolau 2017). While these studies – which range from calculating the "click-through intention" of consumers (Liu and Mattila 2017) to "spatial big data" analyses of gentrification (Wachsmuth et al 2018) – are diverse in their methodologies, the dearth of more ethnographic approaches in this literature is particularly striking. Considering that a large part of the popular discourse surrounding the Airbnb's effects revolves around its qualitative impacts on the communities in which it operates – i.e., harming the social fabric of neighborhoods (Goodman 2016, Peck and Maldonado 2017) – the absence of actual voices from "the neighborhood" represents a void in the literature.

In response my research method takes an ethnographic approach, blending interviews with participant observation in the neighborhoods (Cook 2005, Winchester 2000). While living in New Orleans during the month of June 2017, I conducted eighteen semi-structured interviews with residents of New Orleans. This builds on excellent critical and ethnographic research that deals with the gig-economy more broadly (Cockayne 2016a, 2016c; Richardson 2016, 2017), and in some cases this work even discusses Airbnb in detail (Richardson 2015). However, my guiding research questions were geared specifically towards Airbnb and were most appropriately answered by an ethnographic approach. Specifically, how do locals negotiate, mediate, and articulate their feelings about and experiences of Airbnb in New Orleans? How do they discuss the platform's effects on their day-to-day lives, and what specific frictions are generated by the presence of Airbnb listings in neighborhoods that had previously not been subjected to such a degree of tourism?

My goal in this approach was to gather insight from people outside the formal economic relationship between a guest, a host, and Airbnb (i.e., non-host locals); however, I also spoke to Airbnb hosts, government officials, and property managers in New Orleans. In addition, I supplement these interviews with data scrapes from InsideAirbnb.com[14] and the city of New Orleans' short-term rental (STR) registry. Such data could be employed for future research to study Airbnb-driven gentrification in New Orleans, and indeed, similar approaches using scraped Airbnb data have argued that a proliferation of whole-home Airbnb listings exacerbates the rental crisis in Los Angeles (Lee 2017); estimated that Airbnb was "responsible for something like 16% of the total increase in rents in New York City" between 2014 and 2017 (Wachsmuth et al 2018); and suggested that Airbnb is responsible for 0.42% in house price growth and 0.64% of rental rate growth between 2012 and 2016 (Barron et al 2017). Here, however, I use these data to simply provide context regarding factors such as neighborhood STR density and availability rates of Airbnb listings. In this chapter, I discuss three main components of methodology: 1) a general methodological framework; 2) my formulation of discourse analysis; and 3) the particular challenges of doing fieldwork as a non-local in New Orleans. Lastly, I provide a brief overview of some of factors behind Airbnb as a subject of debate in New Orleans. While my main focus is understand how people negotiate the presence of Airbnb listings, it is important to contextualize why the topic has generated such controversy in New Orleans.

3.1. Recruitment, data collection, and methodology

The primary data used in this project comes from eighteen semi-structured interviews I conducted in New Orleans, mostly during the month of June 2017 (see Table 3). Following an outline that consisted of ten to fifteen questions, these interviews ranged from half-an-hour to nearly two hours in length. A cornerstone of research tools in the human geographer's arsenal, interviews are useful in "understanding interpretations, experiences, and spatialities of social life" (Dowling et al 2015, 680). Because interviews

[14] InsideAirbnb.com is a not-for-profit website that routinely performs data scrapes on Airbnb listings in various cities across the globe. The information collected includes point data for listings, listing names, availabilities for booking, and price per night. For a full perusal of InsideAirbnb's data, see www.insideairbnb.com.

Table 3.1: Research Participants

Pseudonym	Role*	Interview Type	Recorded	Length
April	Airbnb Host	Phone	Yes	48 minutes
Ben	Airbnb Host	In-person	Yes	1 hour 18 minutes
Chris	Airbnb Host	In-person	No	~45 minutes
Jerry	Airbnb Host	In-person	Yes	53 minutes
Kyle	Airbnb Host	In-person	Yes	34 minutes
Lucy	Airbnb Host	In-person	Yes	55 minutes
Tammy	Airbnb Host	In-person	Yes	32 minutes
Barney	Airbnb Host, Property Manager	In-person	Yes	50 minutes
Ralph	Airbnb Host, Property Manager	In-person	Yes	1 hour 2 minutes
Dennis	Airbnb Host, Property Manager	In-person	Yes	1 hour 15 minutes
Ron	Government Official	In-person	Yes	49 minutes
Diane	Neighborhood Organization	In-person	No	~1 hour
Leslie	Neighborhood Organization	In-person	Yes	1 hour 9 minutes
Marlene	Neighborhood Organization	In-person	Yes	55 minutes
Ann	Non-Host Local	Phone	Yes	~1 hour
Sebastian	Non-Host Local	Phone	No	~45 minutes
Tom	Non-Host Local	In-person	Yes	1 hour 48 minutes
Andy	Planning Consultant	In-person	No	~2 hours

*These categories are a basic taxonomy. They do not capture the nuance of people's impact use of Airbnb (i.e., low versus high) nor people's political opinions regarding STR regulation. For example, while there are 7 respondents classified as "Airbnb Host," some listed their home on weekends while others were operating property/ies as a more-or-less full-time vacation rental. Hosts held diverse opinions on how Airbnb should be regulated and what their localized impact was on the spaces in which they operated STR's.

are conversational exchanges (Valentine 2005, 111) that entail gesticulations, silences, expressions, and affective sensations – all of which behaviors are part of what a researcher might consider during analysis (Dittmer 2010, 274) – I conducted interviews in person whenever possible. Interviews were held by phone when it was impossible to meet in person. Of the eighteen interviews conducted, fourteen were recorded and later

transcribed for analysis. During the four unrecorded interviews, interview notes were taken.

While most of these interviews were conducted in public places, such as coffee shops, some took place in less conventional settings. As Valentine points out, "Where an interview takes place can make a difference" (2005, 118), and indeed, these locational variations both afforded my interviews more complexity and posed certain challenges. For example, a number of the Airbnb hosts I interviewed were hospitable enough to invite me into their home. This kind gesture constituted me as a "guest" as well as a researcher, and upon reflection, I wonder whether it led me to ask less challenging questions of them, or at least hedge more provocative questions that might have made them feel uncomfortable in their own space. In another case, the interview was conducted on a driving tour of the city, which was being given to me by my interview respondent. Having spoken with and in fact been driven by this man before – I met him as his Uber passenger – I felt comfortable enough in my own safety to conduct the interview. However, as Waitt and Warren have demonstrated (2008), the privilege immanent in being a white man is certainly what afforded me the requisite level of comfort to accept a driving tour of the city from a near-complete stranger. During the last fifteen minutes of our drive, the interviewee expressed at length personal views about crime and policing that I considered racist. Valentine has discussed circumstances under which "interview participants may express racist, homophobic, or other offensive views" (2005, 123). While challenging his views might have yielded a more analytically fruitful conversation (ibid 123), it did not feel safe to do so while sitting in the passenger seat of his car. This moment was the exception rather than the rule during my interviews, but it nonetheless posed a methodological challenge.

As another way to document and reflect upon my fieldwork in New Orleans, I took field notes and photographs during my everyday experiences in the city. While not treated as data *per se*, these materials are nevertheless crucial points of reference for my time in New Orleans – they represent that "blurry space of everyday life that… is also 'the field'" (Katz 1994, 67; Staeheli and Lawson 1994). In this regard, I made it a policy to always carry my recorder, my notebook, and informed consent documents with me, never knowing when the field might emerge. That said, because "the field" is a tenuous

and contingent thing, it is also "constructed through power relations that define academics and the people and places we study" (Staeheli and Lawson 1994, 97). This demands that researchers, especially those conducting work in cultural contexts with which they are less familiar, be attendant to their own positionality and reflexive toward their role in knowledge production (Nagar and Geiger 2007). In my case, the main challenge was to be aware of my role as a tourist doing critical research about tourism, which I discuss more in a later section.

In order to acquaint myself with local politics and a general sense of place, I attended numerous meetings and events across the city. These included a mayoral debate, short-term rental violation hearings, second-line parades, visits to museums, organizing sessions by a local grassroots political group, and so on. While I found these experiences informative and familiarizing as a non-local, they are not treated as data in my thesis. Furthermore, it is important to note that what might appear to a researcher as a "local" process could in fact be a function of state, national, or global phenomena (Massey 1991). Staeheli and Lawson caution against "conflating the field site with local, concrete processes" (1994, 98; quoting Golerick 1991) – in other words, it is necessary to attend to how certain phenomena scale up, scale down, and even operate simultaneously at different scales. This is of particular significance in New Orleans, where many of my respondents spoke of Airbnb in relation to larger issues that are also tied to exogenous forces. As such, I am attendant in my analysis to the scalar forces (i.e., state, national, and corporate political economic pressures) at play.

Interview respondents included neighborhood residents, government officials, and property managers and Airbnb hosts. This selection echoes Stroma Cole's work on tourism, authenticity, and commodification, in which she focuses on the perspectives of "government, tourists, and villagers" (2007, 943). I recruited Airbnb hosts, property managers, and government officials via email using the email addresses provided on the City of New Orleans' public website and STR registry.[15] While "cold-calling" a personal phone number (Valentine 2005, 116) can be a problematic recruitment strategy, emails

[15] The STR registry is a public database, updated daily, which includes the locational and contact information of licensed STR hosts in the city of New Orleans. It can be accessed via the New Orleans government website: https://www.nola.gov/short-term-rentals/.

were found to be less intrusive, as the recruitment email could simply be ignored or scrolled past in the recipient's inbox (and many were; my response rate was close to 10%). I intentionally recruited Airbnb hosts and property managers who either lived in or managed property in the Treme neighborhood, a historically black neighborhood lakeside of the French Quarter. While neighborhoods like the Marigny and the Bywater are more heavily inundated with Airbnb's and STR listings, my research agenda drew me to Treme 1) because the neighborhood had been subjected to a history of environmental racism and harmful urban revitalization projects; 2) because of its affiliations with African-American history, media representation, and a general sense of "cool," a focus on Treme was more closely aligned with questions about how people negotiate representations of authenticity; and 3) while some neighborhoods had been solidly gentrified, Treme seemed to still be in the process, making the proliferation of Airbnb's all the more urgent to examine. In any case, this recruitment strategy yielded seven respondents.

For the other eleven respondents, I relied on snowball sampling, introductions from initial key informants, and chance encounters with neighborhood residents who appeared interested in the research topic. Some researchers have questioned the efficacy of snowball sampling as a technique of recruitment, suggesting that it does not capture "representative" samples (Arcury and Quandt 1999), but my goal was not one of representativeness. As Valentine notes, "the aim of an interview… is *not* to be representative… but to understand how individual people experience and make sense of their own lives" – which aligns with my research questions and approach (2005, 111).

3.2. Analytical technique: discourse and discourse analysis

The primary method used to analyze the interviews was discourse analysis. However, discourse itself is a slippery thing to pin down (Purvis and Hunt 1993), and following the so-called "discursive turn" in critical geography, studies that rely on discourse analysis have become "almost innumerable" (Dittmer 2010, 274). To speak of discourse runs the risk of "either meaning almost nothing, or being used with more precise, but rather different, meanings in different contexts" (Jorgenson 2002, 1). Given the coincident ubiquity/variety of discourse and discourse analyses, it is important to clarify how I adopt these concepts in my project.

In a pithy sense, "discourse" refers to what Jason Dittmer calls a "culturally-specific mode of existence" (2010, 275). Digital objects, physical landscapes, ideologies, and ways of speaking might embody, reinforce, or resist a particular discourse. Richard Schein, quoting Duncan (1990, 12), defines discourses as "shared meanings which are socially constituted, ideologies, [or] sets of 'common sense' assumptions" (Schein 1997, 663). Schein argues that discourse can "materialize" in the cultural landscape, for example, through practices such as Sanborn insurance mapping and redlining. Elsewhere, Gillian Rose describes discourse as "groups of statements which structure the way a thing is thought, and the way we act on the basis of that thinking" (2001, 136). Alongside these scholars, I understand discourse in a similar sense: a flexible set of practices and representations that are normalized through language, practice, and repetition. The "sharing" economy and its eponymous discourse are a good example of how discourses become normalized and embodied through practices. The discursive framing of on-demand economic practices as "sharing" – i.e., ride-hailing via Lyft as "ridesharing," or STR's via Airbnb as "home-sharing" – renders these platforms as "both part of the capitalist economy and as an alternative" (Richardson 2015, 121). Cockayne argues, however, that these practices are ultimately neoliberal, and that in turn they constitute a normalized, albeit romanticized, landscape of precarious labor and work (2016a, 2016c).

In any case, it is clear from the above definitions that discourse, which informs behavior and informs people's subjectivities, is inextricably linked with knowledge and power. As Foucault demonstrates in his tracing how and by whom Western discourses around sexuality are shaped, "it is in discourse that power and knowledge are joined together" (Foucault 1978, 100). For Foucault, one cannot seize or acquire power, so to speak – power can only be deployed or exercised, as a *relation*, and discourse is what "transmits and produces power" (ibid 94, 101). While discourse reinforces power, it "also undermines and exposes it, renders it fragile and makes it possible to thwart it" (Foucault 1978, 101). Importantly, here, Foucault is pointing out that discourse is not some abstract force exerted from the top down. Foucault speaks of networks and nodes, fractures and fields: for him, power relations defy dichotomy – they are unstable and rearranging, with many entrances for discourse as "a point of resistance and a starting point for an opposing strategy" (1978, 101). Discourse analysis is one such way of calling into question what

centers of power-knowledge enable (or are enabled by) a particular discourse (ibid 98). The value of discourse analysis, then, is to disclose how such constellations of knowledge and power are structured (Doel 2010, 490), and – not insignificantly – to propose modes of intervention.

Informed by this formulation of discourse, I approach my interview transcripts with a series of research questions in mind: specifically, what kinds of discourses does Airbnb deploy and normalize? What are the mechanisms by which those discourses produce different subjectivities in different people? What are the social effects of those mechanisms, and how are such subjectivities negotiated, mediated, and articulated by people in New Orleans? In particular, how do non-host locals discuss Airbnb, Airbnb guests, and Airbnb hosts? What are their opinions of the city's regulations, and how do they feel they are brought in relation to the city and Airbnb itself? Here, I turn to Norman Fairclough (2009) and Gillian Rose (2001) in detailing the actual practice of discourse analysis, elaborating the method in the context of Airbnb.

I use an adapted version of Fairclough's (2009) five-step framework to conduct a critical discourse analysis (CDA) of my interview data. In order to begin CDA, Fairclough argues, it is important to identify a "social problem" (2009, 125). Airbnb, while not necessarily a social problem for all people or in all spaces, has been the subject of significant debate and contestation in New Orleans, and as such constitutes an issue worthy of analysis (in fact, the contingency and complexity of its operation make it all the more so). For Fairclough, the next step in preparing analysis is to examine what "social practices" constitute the prevailing "social order" of the problem in question (ibid 124). This might operate at different scales; for instance, it could be broadly argued that the *social practices* of Airbnb and its users (hosting, leasing, marketing, etc.) are embedded in a *social order* of neoliberal platform capitalism (Srnicek 2016), while the specific case of Airbnb in New Orleans must also attend to the social, cultural, and economic forces at play in the city (local regulations, elements of New Orleans' STR debate, history of city's tourism policies, etc.). In order to analyze the social problem in its particular milieu, Fairclough writes that "we need to analyze interactions," which include conversations, newspaper articles, commercials, emails, and so forth (Fairclough 2009, 126). In the context of this project, interactions could be more aptly described as

data. Finally, Fairclough poses a key question: does the social order – the "network of social practices" – *need* the social problem (ibid 126, 134)? Put another way: do contested forms of short-term home rental, neoliberal urban governance in New Orleans, and discursive formulations of "sharing" *need* Airbnb in order to sustain themselves? This question is not a simple yes or no, and in some ways it is the question that I wrestle with for the duration of the empirical chapters.

Here, I depart from Fairclough and turn to Gillian Rose's perspective on conducting discourse analysis, which is more pointedly geographic in nature. In her book on visual methodologies, Rose identifies two main types of discourse analysis. First, in *discourse analysis I*, more attention is paid to "various kinds of visual images and verbal texts" than to "the practices entailed by specific discourses"; and second, in *discourse analysis II*, more attention is paid to "the practices of institutions" in question than to "visual images and verbal texts" (Rose 2001, 140). The approach I ultimately follow to analyze interviews is more a combination of the two, in that I consider 1) the verbal texts and spatial practices of interview respondents as well as 2) the institutional practices of the New Orleans government and of Airbnb itself.

To begin my discourse analysis, I read through all of the transcripts and interview notes while looking for keywords and concepts. For example, I would make note of comments about gentrification, authenticity, and STR regulations. Next, I aggregated these keywords and concepts into a set of central themes. Some of these themes were drawn directly from the keywords – "gentrification," for instance, is a broad enough topic in its own right – while others, such as "cultural fabric of neighborhoods," had to be named. Finally, I reviewed the transcripts again to collect quotes of interest and look for points of agreement or disagreement between interview respondents. From the set of central themes, I ultimately identify and analyze various discourses related to Airbnb in New Orleans. Some of these discourses were *a priori* in materials like the city's tourism policies or Airbnb's marketing rhetoric, while others emerged from reading interview transcriptions and notes. For example, the discourse of neighborhood residents "Playing Host" for tourists emerged from thematic comments about the "cultural fabric of neighborhoods," while the discourse of "Authentic Experience through Airbnb" was *a priori* in Airbnb's marketing rhetoric. Another example of emergent discourse is the

"Guilty Host," or the Airbnb host who was cognizant of their impact in a community and struggled to reconcile the benefit of extra income with the ways in which their hosting practices might affect their neighbors. "Gentrification" is an excellent example of a theme that was articulated in multiple discourses; some respondents discussed "Gentrification as Renovation," while others spoke of "Gentrification as Displacement." In any case, these are the discourses that I draw on for analysis. Having in this section demonstrated 1) what I mean by "discourse" and 2) my approach to discourse analysis, I move forward and detail some of the particular challenges of conducting fieldwork in New Orleans.

3.3. Challenges of outsider research in an insider city

New Orleans is a peculiar place for conducting domestic fieldwork in the contiguous United States, if only because it is arguably the least domestic place *in* the contiguous United States. Some folks affectionately call it "the northernmost city in the Caribbean," gesturing toward its culturally Caribbean roots (Waddington 2014), while other locals identify more with its Spanish, French, and Creole past than they do with anything American. As one of my respondents, a lifelong resident of New Orleans, put it: "We're different. We're not the South, we're not America, we're New Orleans. We're Caribbean, we're Mediterranean, we're African. We're all those things, but the last thing we are, probably, are Americans."

This sense of pride was rivaled, at least in my experience, only by residents' equally strong sentiments of enervating frustration towards the city. In a different case, a research participant described his feeling of futility toward New Orleans' perceived brokenness as "resistance exhaustion," and while this comment came in the context of Airbnb, it could be applied to many other issues. Potholes, corruption, environmental racism, gentrification, wage stagnation, potholes, rising rents, crime, policing, tourism policy, broken pump stations, *potholes*… the list goes on. Some of these could be attributed to extra-local forces, but many were uniquely New Orleanian concerns. Potholes were never just potholes; they represented something bigger about how the city treated its citizens. For every fawning reflection over "magnificent" architecture, the "true New Orleans" double shotgun, or "the birthplace of jazz," there was another for

"crime problems," "education problems," and "concentrated old money" with "entrenchment at the top." Many of my respondents simply struggled to reconcile New Orleans with itself.

However peculiar a city New Orleans is to conduct fieldwork, it is made even more so by being a non-local. One thing was certain among my research participants: love their city or hate their city, New Orleans was *their* city. Residents, and especially those who were native or multi-generational New Orleanians, often expressed a sense of ownership and territoriality over the place. This was so prominent in the vernacular that some my respondents would even describe their own (competing) taxonomies for localness. One interviewee, for example, described a spectrum along which New Orleanians could measure how local they were; for him, the differences were effectively distilled to the "Pre-K" crowd, the "Post-K" crowd, and the natives.[16] Another respondent argued that there was no spectrum of localness, but rather, "you either are or you aren't in New Orleans. … So it's not who's *more* [local] so much as, yeah, like it's insider versus outsider."

As a graduate student from the University of Kentucky, it was always clear on which side of that divide I landed, but this is not to suggest that I felt unwelcome in New Orleans. On the contrary, most people to whom I spoke were enthusiastic, opinionated, and more than willing to entertain a discussion of my research agenda. Some went even further: one research participant invited me to a Bywater cocktail bar and then gave me a short tour of the Tulane campus. Another let me sample from his Bourbon collection after our interview. Still, during my time in the city I retained the weight of being an outsider. The "outsider" feeling that I am expressing, rather than discomfort or a sense of being unwelcomed, could be better described as self-consciousness – a pointed awareness of my self, as a tourist, and the "tourist gaze" that I was formulating theoretically and participating in simultaneously (Urry and Larsen 2011, 17). I would sit in the Treme Coffeehouse and ponder whether I was complicit in the gentrification activity that Sharon Zukin calls "domestication by cappuccino" (2010, 4). Here it is useful to rekindle the

[16] "Pre-" and "Post-K," he explained, are short for "Pre-" and "Post-Katrina." This delineation is made more potent when one considers the reality of post-Katrina racial gentrification (Johnson 2015). As Richard Campanella points out, the influx of "urbanists, environmentalists, and social workers" who moved after the storm brought with them a wave of gentrification to (most notably) neighborhoods like the Marigny and the Bywater, but increasingly places like the Irish Channel and Mid City.

question, “Can we as researchers speak for politically marginalized peoples and groups if we do not belong to those groups?” (Staeheli and Lawson 1994, 99) While the authors are specifically discussing Western researchers in non-Western settings here, the question is certainly applicable in New Orleans, a city in which difference is sometimes constituted by a politics of localness. Staeheli and Lawson go on to suggest an answer:

> “This recognition – that we cannot fully understand others’ subjectivities and speak with authority for them – does not imply relativism and certainly must not lead us to abandon research topics. Rather, we should recognize that the space of betweenness is a site in which we can uncover the experiences and politics of marginalized groups.” (1994, 99)

It is in such a space of betweenness that being an outsider has implications, both productive and challenging, for my research. Indeed, it can actually be *easier* to approach a place as an outsider researcher. Insofar as critical research tends to explore the quotidian and taken-for-granted stuff of everyday life, an insider researcher “may be ‘over-familiar with the community’” in which their work takes place (DeLyser 2001). However, being an outsider also proved somewhat difficult when trying to forge new connections during my short month in the city, and at times it even felt disingenuous to undertake a project in which I had less a personal stake than what Peirce Lewis, in his historical geography of New Orleans, called a “personal curiosity” (2003 [1976], xi). Put another way, what authority did I have to represent this city? In the pages that follow, as I try to tell my version of the story about what happened (and is happening still) regarding Airbnb in New Orleans, I try to lean into my role as an academic outsider but more importantly as a conscientious tourist – one who quite sincerely appreciated the romanticism of the city, but with a persistent twinge of guilt, having been apprised to the exclusionary forces at play and thus knowing how very fraught the indulgence was.

It is difficult to put this tension better than Peirce Lewis did, who in the preface of his book, posed to himself a guiding challenge: “I wanted to see if one could draw a holistic picture of a place such as New Orleans, where romance and reality are so cheerfully interchanged – *on the one hand recognizing the romance without wallowing in it, on the other hand recognizing the hard economic realities without treating the city as an economic machine*” (2003 [1976], xi; emphasis mine). My goal was not, like Lewis, to draw a holistic picture of the place, but still: it is funny how both so little and so much has changed in the forty-five years since Lewis originally wrote those words. There is a

new mayor, but he has the same last name;[17] there are new economic actors, but they work in the same machine. A new geographer runs up against the same narrative hurdle – things seem to cycle through. During one of my interviews, my respondent Tom spoke wistfully of Galatoire's, a fancy restaurant on Bourbon Street where he said people leave work for a liquid lunch on Fridays and tend not to clock back in. According to Tom, you can walk in there alone and leave with "twenty best friends that you just met… We love it 'cause it's the same thing over and over again." The same thing over and over – and yet, a moment later in the same train of thought, he mourned how some things didn't change: "My wife runs a department at [a local university] and I'm not gonna tell you what she makes, but she makes shit. They've never, they've never promoted her in eight years of working there, and she started out not running the department, and now she does. They've never promoted her."

As a student of geography for whom, like Lewis, New Orleans was a place more or less "terra incognita" at the start of my research, I continue to wrestle with this tension: trying to not treat the city as a monolith, trying to locate my work in "the space of betweenness" that is both reflexive and productive, trying to tease through moments of difference and sameness. In the chapters that follow, I attempt to discern if the situation of Airbnb in New Orleans is just a newer, shinier version of the same-old, or if it is indeed some other thing entirely. I will argue that there are indeed elements of both, but to borrow a final acknowledgement from Lewis, "The reader must decide whether I have succeeded."

[17] I am referring here to Maurice "Moon" Landrieu (1970-1978), and his son, Mitch Landrieu (2010-2018). Interestingly, they are not the only mayoral legacy in the past fifty years: see also Ernest Morial (1978-1986) and Marc Morial (1994-2002).

CHAPTER 4.

UNTANGLING DISCOURSES: PERCEPTIONS OF THE SHORT-TERM RENTAL DEBATE

It is difficult to put a date on the beginning of the short-term rental (STR) controversy in New Orleans. *Motherboard*, a branch of *Vice Magazine* that deals with the interactions between humans and technology, published a story on Airbnb in New Orleans in November 2014 (Zanolli 2014). Local New Orleans paper *The Times-Picayune* reported on Airbnb and issues over STR legislation in the city as early as June 2014 (Sayre 2014), and the New Orleans monthly publication *ANTIGRAVITY* ran an article about unlicensed STR's in March 2014 (Commode and Bentley 2014). InsideAirbnb conducted their first data scrape of New Orleans in early 2015, which is around the time the debate in New Orleans was first mentioned, to my knowledge, in the academic literature (Johnson 2015; see also Davidson and Infranca 2016). Considering this constellation of reports, it appears that a debate over Airbnb in New Orleans had solidly entered the public discourse by early-to-mid 2014.

Much of the debate over Airbnb's proliferation began around two neighborhoods that had been gentrification hotspots since Hurricane Katrina[18] – the Marigny and the

[18] When Hurricane Katrina struck the gulf coast, there was a second deluge in New Orleans not long after. Richard Campanella writes, "A few thousand urbanists, environmentalists, and social workers – we called them 'the brain gain;' they called themselves YURPS, or Young Urban Rebuilding Professionals – took leave from their graduate studies and nascent careers and headed South to be a part of something important" (2013). My interview respondent Tom remembered those days as a sort of rediscovery of the city. After Katrina, Tom said, "there's a lot of volunteers that come down here, a tremendous amount, and they – the world, the city, the country I should say more than anything – discovered New Orleans [again]." This migration brought a new kind of wealth to New Orleans; "idealistic millennials" followed by more "specially skilled" workers, "new-media entrepreneurs," and big shots from the "booming tax-incentivized Louisiana film industry" (Campanella 2013). Since these newcomers were often from bigger cities with larger housing markets, the real estate in New Orleans was almost laughably affordable. In describing this wave of post-Katrina gentrification, Tom noted: "So maybe they buy a fixer-upper for $80,000 and they put a hundred grand into it, it's now a nice little piece of property, it's, it's restored, at least from the outside… that's another little twist – a lot of the times they're going in and gutting it, taking out all the… old plaster, putting in sheetrock, so the integrity of the outside is there, but the integrity of the inside isn't anymore." As I clarified in Chapter 2, it has not been my concern to argue that any one thing is more "authentic" than another – and yet, Tom's articulation of the gutting of "old plaster," the "integrity" of a historic home, bears a striking resemblance to Benjamin's formulation of the aura, and of mass reproduction as "the social basis of the aura's present decay" (23). In many ways, it is the fulfillment of Neil Smith's prophecy – though he was far from the only one to make this prediction – that the poor, African-American and working class people who evacuated will not be welcomed back to New Orleans, which will in all

Bywater – but such debates have since encompassed the whole city. According to Barney, an STR property manager, "Bywater [and] Marigny was kinda like the first – yeah, that's where originally the, the protesting came from." Tom, a resident of the Bayou St. John neighborhood, echoed this sentiment, describing how Airbnb has moved through the city in waves: "You have the first wave of Airbnbs… you know, you got the French Quarter, you got Treme, Marigny, and the Bywater, that's kind of the first wave. The secondary wave is… Upper Garden District, Lower Garden District, Carrollton area." His language of how Airbnb proliferated bears a striking resemblance to how scholars have discussed the historical "waves" of gentrification (Hackworth and Smith 2001, Gotham 2005). However, Tom specifically identifies Airbnb expansion as a temporal *and* a spatial phenomenon, creeping outward from the city center over time. In another conversation, April – an interviewee who listed her Treme home on Airbnb when she left town for work – told a story that suggests Airbnb became very popular in Treme around June 2015:

> "I travel a ton for work… periodically I'll rent out my place while I'm on the road, cause sometimes I'm on the road for weeks at a time… So then I started noticing in Treme, maybe like two years [prior to June 2017], like first of all my… inquiries were going down, and like the suggested rental price on Airbnb was going down, and I was like, 'What the hell is that, why is that happening?' And then I looked… on the map on Airbnb, and I was like holy crap – there's like a kajillion Airbnbs in my neighborhood when there wasn't before… it really dramatically shifted because all of a sudden like I was like not the only one in my neighborhood that was renting out my place."

As of this writing, of course, the Airbnb debate is well established in New Orleans. *The New York Times* covered the story in March 2016, and the *The Lens*, a "nonprofit, nonpartisan public-interest" local news organization, has been periodically updating an interactive map[19] that visualizes the proliferation of registered STR's in New Orleans. In this chapter, I provide an overview of the discourses that frame the STR debate in New Orleans, including data that contextualizes the landscape of STR's; the motivations for running an Airbnb in New Orleans; and the critiques that many citizens – hosts and non-hosts alike – leverage against the practices of STR home-rental. I often

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likelihood be rebuilt as a tourist magnet with a Disneyfied BigEasyVille oozing even more manufactured authenticity than the surviving French Quarter nearby. (Slater 2006, 737).

[19] www.thelensnola.org/new-orleans-airbnb-tracker/.

draw on the Treme neighborhood as an example, but I also recognize that in doing so one runs the risk of treating it as a "monolithic community" (Crutcher 2010, 6). As Michael Crutcher notes, "any discussion of 'a Treme community' or 'black Treme' is problematic" (6-7). With this caution in mind, I still focus on Treme for two reasons: first, while neighborhoods like Marigny and Bywater are generally what one could consider "post-gentrified" (Wachsmuth and Weisler 2018, 14), Treme is actively gentrifying in nebulous ways; and second, through media representations like coverage of jazz funerals or the HBO show *Treme*, the neighborhood is often represented as a hearth of "authentic" New Orleanian experience. My goal in focusing on case studies from Treme is to explore the forces at play in gentrification, and complicate its representations of authenticity. In this chapter, drawing on various interviews, I analyze the key discursive themes used to frame Airbnb in New Orleans.

4.1. Gentrification, renovation, displacement

> *[Scene: I am sitting with my interviewee, Jerry, at a table outside of a coffee shop in the Marigny. We are recounting our interaction with the barista, who told us that his rent had gone up $600 in the past six years.]*
>
> **Jerry**: And he's renting a room in a house with like roommates and shit like that, so the house has like gotta be, it's fucking expensive, you know.
>
> **Guy walking down the street**: It's all fucking expensive.
>
> **Jerry**: Yeah.

In the city of New Orleans, tourism and gentrification remain intimately linked. As detailed in Chapter 2, Kevin Fox Gotham's case study of the French Quarter has argued for a theory of "tourism gentrification," which highlights "the role of state policy in encouraging both gentrification and tourism development" (2005, 1100). While Gotham's research is limited to the French Quarter, Gladstone and Préau have focused instead on "residential tourist zones," arguing that "gentrification in New Orleans is a microlevel, block-by-block phenomenon that cannot be understood without considering the effects of an expanding 'tourist bubble'" (2008, 138). While Airbnb is by no means the culprit for all gentrification, it is certainly one force situated within a tourism industry that spurs gentrification activity. Furthermore, Airbnb facilitates a form of residential

tourism gentrification that, in alignment with Gladstone and Préau's formulation of gentrification, operates on a block-by-block basis.

It is outside the scope of this section to discern how much gentrification activity is directly attributable to Airbnb and STR's in New Orleans. To take a position in that regard would demand a more quantitative analysis of neighborhood change (see for example Hammel and Wyly 1998), as well as a comprehensive dataset of real estate values and proprietary Airbnb data. However, accounts from neighborhood residents combined with US Census data at least provide circumstantial evidence of Airbnb's culpability. Here, I turn specifically to interviews, municipal records, and Census data to explore stories and day-to-day experiences of how residents living in Treme saw Airbnb listings as participating in gentrification, and in turn, how they discursively approached the relationship between gentrification and Airbnb.

My respondent Barney, an STR property manager, described in theory how Airbnb participates in gentrification. According to Barney, short-term renting is a much easier and more profitable enterprise than long-term tenants: "Half the time, double the money – how can you say no?" Perhaps unwittingly, Barney is articulating what Neil Smith famously called the "rent gap," or the "disparity between the potential ground rent level and the actual ground rent capitalized under the present land use" (1979, 545). For example, if a landlord is currently letting to their long-term tenant at a rent of $1,000 per month (*actual ground rent*), but could increase their monthly earnings to $2,000 (*potential ground rent*) by converting the property into a full-time STR, it becomes – as my interviewee Ben said – a "pretty obvious move in terms of numbers" what to do. In this theory of gentrification, Smith argues that cities are attracting a return of capital (from the sub/exurbs) because the depreciation of urban property values has increased the potential ground rent for landlords and developers, thus creating an incentive for reinvestment. That increase in potential ground rent drives up the value of nearby real estate, both raising property taxes on current homeowners and making it difficult for prospective homeowners to make a purchase.[20]

[20] It should be noted that Smith's rent gap theory of gentrification – which he would later embed within a larger, multi-scalar framework about uneven development (1984) – has been the subject of some critique (Bourassa 1993) but has also been defended and substantiated (Clark 1995, Hammell 1999, Hackworth 2002).

Smith is attendant to the ways in which gentrification is historically situated as a "process of social and spatial differentiation" (Zukin 1987) that is informed by changing political and economic forces from decade to decade (Lees 2000). Gentrification activity might be driven by private reinvestment (Zukin 1987), state intervention (Hackworth and Smith 2001), or public-private partnerships (Harvey 1989). Wachsmuth and Weisler (2018) have suggested that, contrary to how gentrification and the rent gap operated in earlier "waves" (Hackworth and Smith 2001), Airbnb enables gentrification without redevelopment or other forms of state intervention. Building on Neil Smith's theory, they argue, "across certain neighbourhood types (primarily still-gentrifying areas and now-affluent, formerly gentrifying areas), the new, technologically-enabled possibility of short-term rentals systematically raises potential ground rents – and thus creates rent gaps even where there has been little or no devalourization of existing housing" (2018, 6). The authors detail a key departure from Smith's original formulation of the rent gap:

> "While serious Airbnb entrepreneurs may well refurbish their units to increase their success with the service, *the only necessary step for converting a long-term rental to a short-term rental is to remove the existing tenant*. This means that relatively small rent gaps can motivate conversion to short-term rentals; no new mortgages need to be taken out, or contractors hired. In other words, Airbnb enables gentrification without redevelopment." (2018, 8; emphasis original)

In addition to enabling gentrification without redevelopment for landlords, investors, and redevelopers, Airbnb also motivates the logic of closing the rent gap for non-landlord homeowners (2018, 7). For example, Lucy – a social worker who had listed her renovated Treme double (duplex) shotgun home on Airbnb – needed a roommate in order to afford her mortgage. However, she made the decision to "lose the roommate" in May 2016, opting instead to list her home on Airbnb as a whole-home rental:

> "I realized, okay, I can… lose the roommate and then, you know, make… at least the same amount of money and probably more, and I've actually found that on average I'm making $2,000 a month, and it's only like four to six nights a month as opposed to, you know, every night of the month for $550."

Lucy closed the rent gap and then some, nearly quadrupling her earnings by converting from a long-term tenant to a whole home listing on Airbnb for two to three weekends a month. In order for her to Airbnb her home, however, she explained that the rent gap had

to be large enough to justify the "lot of work" she was doing to get her house "Airbnb clean." Her stated policy was, "I only do whole house rentals." In her words:

> "You know, like, it's just not worth [renting the downstairs guest bedroom]… I only make seventy bucks a night for the downstairs bedroom, which is nice side cash, but like, you know, I'd rather just do whole house rentals and make like five hundred bucks a night, than messing around with this other foolishness."

While she said that her $70 per night earnings for the guest bedroom did not "outweigh the costs or work involved," she felt like leaving her home for the weekend – staying at a hotel, or perhaps with her friends in the Marigny – in order to make $550 a night was motivation enough.

Still, Lucy's use of Airbnb falls under what she seemed to feel was a fairly low-impact category. She is not taking affordable housing off of the market – in her words, "it's not like I'm taking an entire home off the rental market" – nor is she cycling through Airbnb guests on a weekly basis. However, as Wachsmuth and Weisler note, "for 'amateur' homeowners… the prospect of monetizing a spare room or staying with friends for an occasional weekend while their residence is rented" – which is exactly what Lucy did – "increases the overall rent achieved through the property," effectively contributing to a rent gap that drives up property values. Lucy herself even alluded as such, noting that "as a property owner, like, my house appraised for a $100,000 more two years after I bought it, and I think that was because of Airbnb driving up property values." Not only does this increase Lucy's annual property tax, but it also affects nearby real estate values.

Many of my interviewees saw gentrification as a generally negative force, providing observations either firsthand or secondhand about how it had affected them and the people they knew. While most interviewees did not see Airbnb as *causing* gentrification, they saw it, at the very least, as *contributing to* or *amplifying* the already-existing process. Tammy, for instance, listed one half of her Treme double shotgun home on Airbnb. She explained that it had taken her years to actually purchase the house she lived in. According to Tammy, "buying a house [in Treme] is so competitive… there's a lot of investors buying up homes, I guess turning them into Airbnb, so people who actually want to live here have a difficult time picking anything up." She went on, "Honestly, my search for a home was over two years long. I've been beat out so many

times where I made an offer but like an investor came in with a cash offer. I don't know who can offer up that much cash unless you're an investor, but people who actually wanna buy a home and live here – it's been really difficult." At the time of our interview, Tammy had recently moved into her Treme home, and was convinced to rent out half of her home after a conversation with friends:

> "My original thought was to, um, live on one side and rent out the other side and have permanent tenants but, um, I had a couple friends who did Airbnb and they said, no, you should really rent out the other side to um Airbnb instead of permanent, uh, you know, tenants, you know, so you don't have to deal. What if you get tenants you don't like? You're stuck with them for however long the lease is, one or two years. So I thought, well maybe I'll give it a try."

April, who listed her home when she left town for work, expressed a similarly critical perspective toward what she saw as the corporatized acquisition of housing in the Treme area. In addition to expressing concern that her neighbor was selling his home and "marketing it as an Airbnb house," she appeared distressed toward what effects this could have for long-term and multigenerational families in Treme:

> "These houses are like gold mines… I know that like all these companies have been wanting this neighborhood. Like since the show *Treme*, the property values went through the roof, and like all these companies wanted these houses but they're all owned by… you know, these families that have been living here for a hundred years."

The HBO series *Treme* is worth discussing in relation to gentrification because it symbolizes the general moment when, to paraphrase Sharon Zukin, how Treme became cool (2010, 35). There are two components to highlight here. First, in becoming a cooler place to *live*, rents will increase for locals and long-term residents of Treme; and second, that in becoming a cooler place to *travel*, housing runs the risk of being converted to STR's, creating rent gaps in new ways. Of these two factors, the first is a more traditional incarnation of gentrification, while the second is enabled by platforms like Airbnb. Where the city of New Orleans saw a 35.5% and 54.9% rise in rent and home values between 2000 and 2016, Treme experienced greater increases, respectively, of 49.2% and 90.2% during the same period (see Table 4). The process of Treme's "becoming cool" was contemporaneous with property values increasing at a greater rate than New Orleans as a whole. Furthermore, over the same period, Treme also became significantly whiter;

Table 4.1: Growth in Monthly Rent and Home Values between 2000 and 2016*						
	2000 Average of Median Gross Rent	*2016 Average of Median Gross Rent*	*Percent Change*	*2000 Average of Median Home Value*	*2016 Average of Median Home Value*	*Percent Change*
Treme	$629.31	$939.65	49.3	$99,683.82	$189,605.52	90.2
Orleans Parish	$767.27	$1,039.83	35.5	$161,504.88	$250,201.79	54.9
Louisiana	$692.32	$862.00	24.5	$125,731.81	$157,328.73	25.1

*Block group data retrieved from www.NHGIS.org. Datasets used: 2000 Decennial Census, 2012-2016 5-year American Community Survey. All data adjusted for inflation to 2018 using inflation calculator from Bureau of Labor Statistics.

between 2000 and 2010, the white population in Treme skyrocketed from 5.3% to 19.6% (Parekh 2015, 207).

April's mention of the HBO series *Treme* is exemplary of the fact that Airbnb is just one part of a larger constellation of cultural and economic forces at play for gentrification in New Orleans. In pointing out that property values increased around the same time that the show *Treme* hit the airwaves, we can merely gesture toward causality – but, tellingly, April is not the only one of my interviewees to have made this connection. Ralph, a multigenerational resident of New Orleans who invested in and renovated property, hosted various Airbnb listings in the city and the Treme neighborhood. He alluded to the Segway and walking tours that were becoming commonplace in Treme, noting, "After [that ridiculous *Treme* series], we started having people on Segways and people walking around." Ralph recalled the days when cab drivers would say, "Oh, don't cross Rampart" (Rampart Street is a dividing line between the French Quarter and Treme). In a consideration of the effects *Treme* had on the neighborhood, he began to discuss his initial investment in his Treme home: in describing his purchase, he said he knew that the "imaginary fence [on Rampart Street] was going to dissolve one of these days, and the overflow as the Quarter got more and more expensive

people would move in this direction, so I felt like it was a good buy at the time, and it certainly has proved, yeah."

The various effects of the HBO series on the actual territory to which it refers have also been discussed in academic literature. Helen Morgan Parmett argues that the TV show entrepreneurializes the "living labor" of the neighborhood residents' spatial practices, benefitting the "media industry itself rather than those spaces and individuals from which labor and value is extracted" (2014, 287). Furthermore, Lynnell Thomas has argued that the HBO series allows "televisual tourists" to "experience the 'authentic' local culture" of Treme, which results in a "racial remapping" of the city (2012, 214). Drawing on Dean MacCannell, whose theory of the touristic "back region" was discussed in Sections 2.1 and 2.2, Thomas writes, "In New Orleans tourism, these 'back regions' are transposed with the city's 'black regions'" – a provocative statement that connects black New Orleanian culture to touristic desire and consumption (2012, 216). In particular, Thomas is critical of the possibility that the "prolificacy of the black culture industry," and of the televised version of Treme, will "dissuade political activism" and cultivate a "false view of racial progress" (2012, 220).

Regardless of how much they are attributable to *Treme* or Airbnb, these increases in property values fall particularly hard upon New Orleans, which is often referred to as a "city of renters" (JPNSI 2018). Indeed, as of 2016, 55% of New Orleans residents are renters. A recent report by the Jane Place Neighborhood Sustainability Initiative (2018) pointed out that of those 55% of citizens, 63% are cost-burdened (spending >30% of total household income on rent) and 37% are severely cost-burdened (>50%). Since Airbnb increases landlord or homeowner wealth by design, it is unclear how its operation in a largely rentier city – and furthermore, one that is heavily cost-burdened by rent – might benefit the majority of New Orleans' citizens.

Of course, while many of my interviewees saw gentrification as a negative force, others simply saw it as a positive contribution. Ralph, who owned, invested in, and renovated many properties – some of which he listed on Airbnb – considered his participation in the housing market as a boon to the neighborhood's quality of life. Ralph had been in the real estate business since he was about thirty; he had "done about a hundred houses" over twenty-four years, and started listing on Airbnb sometime in 2013.

Ralph was in no uncertain terms a pro: he approximated his monthly income from Airbnb somewhere between $10,000 and $15,000. When asked if he felt his work had benefited the neighborhood, he said, "I think so. Um, you know, of course nobody's ever happy. There's the ugly word 'gentrification,' which I hate, um, you know, I, somebody made the comment once, 'Oh, you're gentrifying,' and I said, 'No, actually I'm renovating. I'm working on historic properties.'" When I raised the question about the "ugly word gentrification" again later in the interview, he responded more defensively:

> "I don't want somebody telling me what to do with my property, I know the impact I've had on many neighborhoods after a hundred plus houses, and I have bought the worst – the fire damaged, the termite damage, the places that were gonna be demolished – and brought back. I know the impact that I've had, so no one is going to question me and make me feel bad about destroying a neighborhood because of Airbnb, it's ridiculous. You know, I've been given awards for my work… so anything that anybody has say really doesn't matter. Um, I have friends who – you know [my friend] was here, you know, a couple months back, [she said], 'You know, I really don't like [that you Airbnb].' I said, I don't really give a shit what you like, and I said, you're a, a renter, you'll probably always be a renter, you know, this is your sour grapes coming on to, you know – I own a property. I can do what I can to maximize the amount of money, and it sounds arrogant, but you know why, it's like I said: I feel like it's my just reward for all that I've done."

In Ralph's view, gentrification appeared as no more and no less than renovation. Airbnb revenue was simply his reaping the fruits of his labor. Finally, when asked about the new regulations, Ralph conceded that some people might operate Airbnb in a way that is harmful to the community, but did not see himself as one of those people, instead blaming the absentee owners from out-of-town. "I'm not subjected to the ninety day limit," Ralph said, "so [the regulations are] kind of catered for the, that sort of thing, and to discourage, um, the absentee out-of-town person who could mismanage this, cause I know that's what's causing the bulk of the problems."

In any case, Ralph did not appear convinced that he nor his Airbnb listings were truly responsible for harmful neighborhood change. Perhaps surprisingly, April shared an affinity with Ralph to this end. She expressed that her anxiety over gentrification's effects extended well beyond Airbnb, telling a story about a multi-generational Treme resident who had recently been evicted from his blighted home:

> "So this isn't necessarily even an Airbnb issue, it's just the way the neighborhood is being – so it's a little aside from your research question, is just like, this wonderful man that lives around the corner, he plays the washboard, and he's been living in a house that's definitely blighted, but I'm just like, 'Oh my gosh, at least he's not homeless,' cause his

> mother owned the house, and he's lived there since he was a baby and it's been around their family for… however many years. But this guy, somebody like bought up the Treme community garden, who bought up like two other buildings in the neighborhood, now bought, took, paid the back taxes on his house, and he just became homeless yesterday. And I'm freaking out because I'm just like this poor man who's like seventy years old, and he lived in a blighted house but at least he would've died in his house, and now he's become a homeless person."

In this section, I have explored in greater detail how Airbnb might be implicated in different facets of gentrification and neighborhood change, especially in the realm of property values and displacement. While many of my interviewees saw gentrification as a harmful process, some saw it as a positive contribution. In short, following Gotham (2005) and Wachsmuth and Weisler (2018), I have argued that Airbnb facilitates a certain type of "tourism gentrification" that spreads the "tourist bubble" to more residential areas. Especially in Chapter 6, I will explore some of the other effects of this process that transcend the economic. In the following section, however, I turn to another key theme around which the STR debate in New Orleans oscillated – the neighborhood fabric – and discuss how some Airbnb hosts mitigated and rationalized their own practice of listing on Airbnb.

4.2. The neighborhood fabric, the guilty host

According to New Orleans' official STR registry, nearly 50% of Airbnb listings in the city are owned by the same 20% of hosts, while the other 50% of listings are owned by 80% of hosts (JPNSI 2018). To put it another way, although the vast majority of New Orleanian *hosts* have a one-to-one relationship with the property they rent, about half of the *listings* in the city are owned by the same few people with multiple properties. Interestingly, this figure aligns almost precisely with the numbers that Airbnb uses when citing its positive impact on cities: in their economic impact study on a number of large cities, Airbnb writes that "81% of hosts share the home in which they live" (Airbnb 2018, "Economic Impact").

Airbnb's goal in citing this figure, it seems, is to frame itself as a "sharing" platform utilized mostly by single-homeowners. One of many issues with this figure, however, is that it does not address what the other 19% of hosts are "sharing," and more specifically, what percentage of the local Airbnb market the 19% command. While it may

be true that most hosts live in the property they rent, it is simultaneously true that half of the total listings are likely operating as STR businesses. In the following section, I explore the 80% of people whose only rental on Airbnb is the home in which they live. Based on conversations with Airbnb hosts, I identify an emergent discourse of the "guilty host": someone who was aware of the impacts their listing might have on the surrounding neighborhood, struggled with it, and ultimately created rationalizations for their continued use of Airbnb. In doing so, I also discuss some of the ways in which people observed Airbnb disrupting what was often referred to as the "neighborhood fabric," or the distinct cultural traditions and sociotemporal rhythms of everyday life.

Many residents of New Orleans were disenchanted with Airbnb for reasons outside of housing affordability. Early in the STR debate, New Orleans citizens lamented what they saw as Airbnb turning residential homes into de facto hotels. This line of critique is twofold: in the previous section, I discussed its relationship to gentrification and housing affordability, but an equally common complaint dealt with the day-to-day experiences of living near Airbnbs and STR's. Some citizens described their neighborhoods "like a ghost town" (Sayre and McClendon 2014). Others blamed Airbnb listings for a "revolving door of tourists" in residential spaces (Public Comments 2015). In one particularly rife block of the Treme neighborhood, 13 of the 16 parcels contain licensed STR's – and 10 of those are whole-home rentals with no long-term tenant. Such proliferation of full-time short-term rentals motivated citizens to complain of no more "real neighbors" (Litten 2016).

Frequent points of discussion among my interview respondents were the ways in which Airbnb shifted the temporal rhythms of neighborhood life. Ron, a government official involved with the rollout of STR regulations, gestured toward this idea when he discussed the café where he usually grabs his morning coffee. "So I talk to the owner all the time," Ron said, "and he has expressed for the last couple years, that like during summer, his business drops off dramatically because there are no tourists, and since there are no residents, who's coming?" He went on to describe one of the effects he observed short-term rentals to have on neighborhood-scale businesses:

> "The unfortunate part for me is that it makes sort of these neighborhood-scale business tourism-dependent, where… you know, they can't support that. They need the regular

> cash flow because they're, you know, they're only gonna have so much business on a given day regardless of whether it's full of vacation people or full time residents, there's only gonna be so many people stopping to get coffee. And then when you have nobody, it, it's a much harder impact than a t-shirt shop in the French Quarter whose sales drop fifty percent in the summer because they adjust for that."

Ann, another of my interviewees who lived in Treme, elaborated the same struggle from the perspective of the worker. She was a working actor, but ever since the Louisiana film industry tax incentives, which once earned the state the title "Hollywood South," had been discontinued in 2016, Ann was struggling to find work. She explained that she was "gonna start Ubering tomorrow, which I hate, don't wanna do, but I gotta make extra income." Ann went on:

> "My job where I'm working at is another hospitality job and they've cut hours cause it's so slow, which is another factor brought in from gentrification, Airbnb. Lots of people leave for the summer. It's very hot. If you're not from here it's very hard to endure, so a lot of people leave. So when people leave, there's no one to, A, work any of these jobs, B, a lot of the homes are empty… so you have to rely on tourism. Tourism slows down cause it's too hot. So it's a catch twenty-two, it's just, and it gets worse and worse every year."

Here, Ann and Ron are suggesting that tourism-dependent business models are unsustainable when many homes are empty during the summer. Ann even draws a connection to the issues of gentrification.

These temporal shifts do more than just affect the efficacy of summer business. Tom, an interviewee who lived in the Bayou St. John neighborhood, made statements similar to Ann and Ron, but suggested – echoing Gladstone and Préau's (2008) point about block-by-block gentrification – that it is even worse at smaller scales. Tom felt like "there are areas in the Bywater and Marigny that are already probably about fifty percent short-term rentals," and stated that he gets that "as a quick aside from talking to some of the local corner grocery stores." Tom would pose questions like, "What do you experience during the week?" According to Tom:

> "The coffee shops [are] freaking dead during the week cause all the short-term rentals are occupied on the weekends. So what happens during the week? Hardly any locals left, well guess what, business goes in the toilet during the week. On the weekends, boom it comes back up again, but it doesn't make up for the difference during the week, and also they're carrying different products too they have to because they have a different type of market now."

Tom is describing a sort of weekly boom-bust cycle of tourist foot-traffic that recalibrates both how neighborhood shops do business and what product they stock. Even during my short time in New Orleans, I experienced this at a corner store in Treme. I had stopped in to the food mart on the corner of Robertson and St. Philip Street, running a quick errand on my way home. During my short exchange with the cashier, she said that she thought it was supposed to rain again tomorrow.

"Hopefully it clears up by the weekend," I replied. At that point, the second cashier – who, obscured behind a few boxes, I had barely noticed – piped in jokingly.

"Yeah, that's what you all come down here for. 'Oh yeah, it's the weekend, hope it's nice weather, let's get fucked up.'"

His comment was not mean-spirited – or at least I did not take it that way – but it stuck with me for a number of reasons: a gentle reminder that I looked unambiguously like a tourist in this space, and furthermore, that these corner stores take meticulous note of the temporal trends in their business. The cashier appeared to be referring to the spike in tourism that occurs over the weekend, and considering this corner store was not in a necessarily "touristy" part of town, it seems likely that Airbnb and STR's comprise a large portion of the weekend business whom he detected "get fucked up."

These elements of neighborhood fabric, and the sociotemporal relations between neighbors and neighborhood institutions that they represent, are what my interviewee April described as the "other component" of Airbnb (as in, other than its contributions to economic pressure). As she discussed Airbnb in the neighborhood, for example, it became clear that April had a mental map of where Airbnb listings were located. When asked if she had neighbors with whom she kept in touch and was friendly, April reflexively began to discuss which houses on her block were Airbnb's:

> "Right now, the… two houses to the right of me have people that live in them, the house across from me is an Airbnb, across to the left of me… is a person that is selling their house and is advertising it as a great Airbnb, and the one on the other [side]… the two houses to the left of him are Airbnb."

While not "personally torn" about how she used Airbnb, since she felt that listing her home while traveling for work "doesn't affect… rental prices or housing stock," April expressed internal struggle with her "cultural impact" on the "landscape of the

community." She explained that "since there are like two hundred visitors in a little itty bitty neighborhood, and mine are two of those two hundred people, it really does impact the cultural landscape of the neighborhood." This is something that she was "conflicted about personally, as a person who does Airbnb as a non-whole house rental." April went on to tell a story of how a group of Airbnb guests became disruptive when they were stuck behind a jazz funeral:

> "When there was a jazz funeral like a few weeks ago and these Airbnbers – and it's going through the neighborhood – these Airbnbers are in [their car], are sitting there, yelling at these people because they're like, in their way. And then like it's like, they don't understand or care about this very precious cultural tradition that they should be so glad is unfolding before them… instead, they can't get out of their parking spot because they're having a funeral there."

In thinking about how Airbnb was affecting her neighborhood, this episode seemed to loom large for April. "So like it really is destructive in like outside of the economics… [it] has a cultural impact that like I find to be really disturbing."

Ann, another of my interviewees, demonstrated an off-the-cuff knowledge of the locations of Airbnb listings in her area. When asked if she knew where the Airbnb listings are located on her block, she identified a man named Kyle, whom I had coincidentally interviewed a few weeks prior. Kyle lived down the street from Ann, and even though she took issue with Airbnb's effects more broadly, she had no bad blood with Kyle. However, that did not mean Kyle's practice of listing his home on Airbnb when he left town for work was devoid of any feather ruffling. He discussed how one of his neighbors set up "a video that [the neighbor] put together over the course of the year [and] that he had been shooting through his window of people coming and going… so basically he was spying." The video, put to original music and featuring lyrics that condemned STR practices in New Orleans, were uploaded online sometime around October 2016, though it has since been removed.

Lucy was another example of someone who navigated her guilt as an Airbnb host. She kindly invited me to conduct our interview in her Treme home – a high-ceilinged double (duplex) shotgun[21] that had been renovated into a single unit. Lucy explained that

[21] Shotgun style homes are all over New Orleans, but, and this rings a bit pedantic now that I've written it down, the shotgun house is less an "architectural style" than it is a "structural typology." While the *style* of

she had acquired her double shotgun home in the past few years, acknowledging that while the two sides had been combined, "back in the day this house was probably a double." Upon walking into the spacious home, it was immediately clear why Lucy was "on average… making two thousand dollars a month" through Airbnb alone (and even then, only renting "four to six nights" on a monthly basis). In fact, she stated that by the time of our interview in June, "halfway through the year, I think I've made $13,000."

Lucy expressed that she was conflicted using Airbnb because she recognized that her use of Airbnb was not benefiting lower-income and multigenerational African-American residents of the neighborhood who were the cultural progenitors of the

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the shotgun home may vary from Italianate to Eastlake (my knowledge of which styles begins and ends at nomenclature), its "philosophy of space" remains the same in each one: narrow and long, "one-room wide, one-story high," and no hallway, such that "occupants need to walk through private rooms to access other rooms" – an unbroken vector from front door to back (Campanella 2017, 89). The name comes from a quip that one could fire a shotgun from the front door straight out the back without shelling any walls. Although shotguns have proliferated to other parts of the US – they can be found from Lexington, Kentucky to Chicago, Illinois – the structure was born in New Orleans.

Theories abound for the genesis of the shotgun home, but the most likely comes from John Michael Vlach, who suggests that the shotgun home accompanied the Haitian diaspora of 1809 to New Orleans (Campanella 2017, 90-91). As the shotgun home proliferated beyond New Orleans, there is also a case to be made for the home as a function of real estate developers wanting to compress "as many lots as possible onto a block face" (Kellogg 1982, 38). For example, during postwar Reconstruction in the US, a preponderance of shotgun homes was constructed in the newly established black neighborhoods of Lexington, KY (Dollins 2011).

There are two main reasons that the shotgun home is an important fixture of the landscape when considering Airbnb, especially in New Orleans: authenticity and efficiency. First, the shotgun home provides a certain allure for tourists. The shotgun home looms large enough in the touristic imaginary that the New Orleans Preservation Resource Center (PRC), a prominent historic preservation organization in the city, offers an annual 6-hour tour of shotgun homes in the city. In Airbnb listings, some variation of "shotgun" (including "shot gun," "double," "camelback," and "bungalow") figures into the how hosts self-advertise in about 5% of Airbnb listing titles. Lucy noted how, at least for her, "I'd rather stay in someone's cool house or apartment than a generic Marriott or Holiday Inn." Here, Lucy counterposes the "generic" hotel room with a more authentic place to stay while visiting New Orleans. In this case, authenticity is predicated not just on the ability to stay in someone's actual space, but also the architecture and style of home in which one stays during the visit.

Second, the double shotgun home is an efficiency of the New Orleans cultural landscape that streamlines the process of listing property on platforms like Airbnb. According to data from New Orleans' city registry, there are roughly 4,491 active STR's in New Orleans, and 950 are two listings located within the same property parcel. Of these 950 listings, 474 are both Temporary Licenses. Here, I follow the logic that if exactly two Temporary STR's Licenses are located in the same property parcel– meaning no host is present at the time of either booking in the parcel – they are likely being listed in a double shotgun. This suggests that at least 21% of licensed listings are located in double shotgun homes, while at least 10.5% of total listings are located in otherwise empty double shotgun homes.*

*This was calculated using New Orleans' STR registry data acquired on 3/28/18. After loading the city's official registry into QGIS, I ran a "count points in polygon" tool to identify how many registered STR's each property parcel contains. This allowed me to extract a shapefile of 950 STR listings, each of which was jointly located with another listing in a single property parcel. I then assigned a value to each type of STR, based on its license: accessory = 1, commercial = 3, temporary = 5. Finally, I conducted a "join attributes by location" tool between the STR listings and the property parcels to sum those values, identifying where both licenses in the parcel were Temporary licenses (i.e., any parcel with a value of 10). This isolated 450 listings, located in 275 property parcels.

neighborhood's popular image. As a social worker, one of the things that drew Lucy to New Orleans in the first place was the preponderance of injustice. What better place to fight it, she quipped, "than the deep dirty South?" In this regard she was attendant to the various socioeconomic pressures – for example, income and housing inequality – exerted upon non-white residents of a city like New Orleans. Still, Lucy went back and forth on the extent to which she saw herself complicit in the pressures that a proliferation of Airbnb listings placed on other people in her neighborhood:

> "So it's like I feel kinda guilty in the sense of like I've clearly benefited from Airbnb on multiple levels, but I also say you know like I think I'm, the way I'm operating is fair and just and um I fully support the regulations."

As she continued on this train of thought, Lucy voiced her justifications: that she was helping to save a historic home, and that because this house would not have been on the rental market anyway, she did not feel as though she was removing affordable housing. However, she began to struggle in articulating herself, restarting her sentences midway through a thought and relying more frequently on filler words (i.e., like, you know), as she worked through the tensions that she felt as a homeowner using Airbnb:

> "I'm trying to – yeah, like, where I'm like – okay, this isn't hurting anybody, this house, this full house wouldn't be on the rental market even if Airbnb didn't exist, and I'm helping save a historic home, you know. But you know, we'll see. But it, you know, it's still problematic. I think that, you know – so, say an African-American tenant who is multigenerational from the Treme, they're probably you know due to socioeconomic oppression they're still probably renting their Treme apartment or whatever. They might be getting shoved out by their landlord, you know, at this point. Even if they're not getting shoved out by their landlord, they're not benefiting off of this Airbnb gold rush – and yet this is their neighborhood. This is theirs, you know? So it's still, it's all problematic."

By "theirs," Lucy meant the multigenerational African American residents of Treme, who have deep roots in the area; by "this," Lucy meant the cultural value of the neighborhood from which she was economically benefitting. She struggled to reconcile the two, but ultimately, she could not say no to the extra $2,000 a month.

4.3. From tolerated illegalities to intolerable legalities

> "You know, so, you get to the point where you have to make [short-term renting] legal, at least in some places, in order to make it illegal in other places."
>
> -Interview with Ron, New Orleans city government employee

Laws are funny things. In Denver, CO, it is unlawful to lend your vacuum cleaner to your next-door neighbor. In Kentucky, it is illegal to fish with a bow and arrow, and in New Jersey it is illegal for a man to knit during the fishing season. To tickle a woman in the state of Virginia remains strictly forbidden, and in 1897, the Indiana General Assembly proposed a bill to once and for all declare that the value of $\pi = 3.2$. While these laws are laughable in hindsight, they *do* reveal something about the underlying social assumptions of the times and places in which they were written. Even the short list excerpted here raises questions about the gendered conditions of social life, what constitutes "traditional" hunting methods, and the means by which scientific truth or mathematical knowledge is authenticated. In any case, even if these laws are, technically speaking, "on the books," they are obviously never enforced.

Unlike the more playful examples above, which are less a toleration of illegality than "a matter of laws gradually falling into abeyance" (Foucault 1975, 82), the non-enforcement of STR laws in New Orleans caused more argument than amusement. In Chapter 1, I offered a brief overview of the STR regulations in New Orleans, and in Chapter 2, how the initial confusion over their enforcement was likely a boon for Airbnb more generally. The company's CEO, Brian Chesky, once said to a group of Airbnb hosts, "There are laws for people and there are laws for business, but you are a new category, a third category, people as businesses… as hosts, you are micro-entrepreneurs, and *there are no laws written for micro-entrepreneurs*" (Davidson and Infranca 2016, 242-243). In this section, after providing a more detailed examination of STR regulation in New Orleans, I then explore the legal discourses surrounding the regulation of STR's that emerged during my fieldwork in New Orleans; on the one hand, what the city was willing to overlook, and on the other, what many citizens refused to accept. Drawing on Foucault (1975), I term these discourses *tolerated illegalities* and *intolerable legalities*.

Before January 2017, it was illegal to both 1) advertise STR's in New Orleans and

2) lease an STR for fewer than 30 days (in the French Quarter, fewer than 60 days) without an occupational hotel, motel, or bed-and-breakfast license. However, both of these ordinances were categorically overlooked. As *Times-Picayune* reporter Robert McClendon writes:

> "Advertising short term rentals is technically a criminal offense, subject to fines and even jail time, but few if any have every been successfully prosecuted.
>
> Licensed bed and breakfasts, on the other hand, are subject to several restrictions. They are required to submit to an inspection from the fire marshal and aren't allowed have more than one kitchen, a major draw from many tourists.
>
> They are also required to buy a permit, the price of which ranges from $200-$600 depending on how many rooms the operation has. Bed and breakfasts with three units or more have to pay an occupancy tax of .50 cent per night per room." (2014a)

The city's choice to overlook the existing ordinances was an example of what Foucault called *tolerated illegalities*, or the "non-application of rule and the non-observance of… ordinances." For Foucault, the toleration of certain illegalities existed in each of the social classes as "a condition of the political and economic functioning of society" (1975, 82). This is not quite the case in New Orleans, where life would go on whether STR's were regulated or not; however, I still argue that *tolerated illegality* is a useful framework for conceptualizing the relationship between the city and its constellation of STR activities. To be sure, the city had been actively investigating how it might regulate STR's since at least 2011, but the fact remains that few (if any) fines were levied until June 2017. To understand what it meant for the city to take an aggressively laissez-faire attitude toward the enforcement of STR laws, it is important to briefly review how those laws were created in the first place. In giving a more detailed history of STR's in New Orleans, I rely on 1) coverage from local newspapers, 2) municipal documents, and 3) an interview with Ron, a city government official who was working closely with the rollout of new STR regulations at the time of our interview in June 2017.

Ron attended his first meeting on the topic of short-term rentals – then called transient vacation rentals – "in 2011 or 2012."[22] The issue at hand was, "how do we deal with the problem people?" By this, Ron meant the here-and-there complaints that went

[22] Transient vacation rental never really stuck in the public parlance, thankfully, because TVR is a dreadful acronym.

something like “my neighbor does [short-term rentals] and it’s incredibly obnoxious.” Again, the use of one’s home as an STR was illegal at this time. Ron recalled, “There's a couple provisions in the law; there was the definition of transient vacation rental in the Comprehensive Zoning Ordinance (CZO), and there was a section of city code that prohibited the advertisement of rentals for less than thirty days, and that was passed sometime in the nineties to ward off just these types of things, sort of in their previous incarnations.” But, he went on, the extant “chunk in the city code was in the city's *criminal* code, meaning only the police can enforce it, not me… and in the zoning ordinance, if you are prohibiting the rental of that property for less than thirty days, you have to be able to prove that the property was rented for less than thirty days.” In other words, the current provisions in the city’s zoning codes did not allow for Ron’s department to enforce violations; in fact, the language of the code did not accommodate for enforcement at all. According to the director of the City Planning Commission (CPC), “Municipal Court judges [were] reluctant to make criminal what amounts to a zoning violation” (McClendon 2014b). In turn, critics of the practice would argue that, following a consideration of the economic and cultural impacts, unregulated STR’s constitute far more than a mere zoning violation.

Still, according to Ron, there was only a small contingent of homeowners illegally leasing their properties as STR’s, and it was a relatively trivial concern that mostly unfolded on a neighbor-to-neighbor basis. At that point, the only mention of transient vacation rentals in the municipal code occurred in Sec. 70-563, a chapter on “Fees for certificates of use and occupancy and compliance.” In the CZO, transient vacation rentals were similarly ill-defined, and any enforcement required “proof that the property has been rented for less than 30 days over the course of a year, making the ordinance… nearly impossible to enforce” (Feldman 2014). Proof was famously difficult to generate, and as such even the cases that were brought to the attention of regulatory bodies generally went unchecked.

The ratification of the Comprehensive Zoning Ordinance on July 10, 2014, is what I identify as a key moment in the contemporary STR debate. Not only does it represent the city’s first attempt at incorporating a more specific definition of STR’s into their zoning code – one that distinguishes STR’s from other kinds of short-term lodging

like hotels, motels, and bed-and-breakfasts – but it also signifies the entry of a debate over STR's into a larger public consciousness. Following the CZO amendment, the legal definition of transient vacation rentals was: "Rentals of a premises or any portion thereof for dwelling, lodging or sleeping purposes with duration of occupancy of less than sixty (60) consecutive days in the Vieux Carré and less than thirty (30) consecutive days outside the Vieux Carré" (New Orleans City Council, "Regular Meeting News Summary" 2014).

The goal was not to legalize STR's, but rather to distinguish transient vacation rentals from hotels, motels, or traditional bed-and-breakfasts, thus producing a regulatory framework that made them easier to enforce. This is a key distinction, because even despite the CZO's text amendment, enforcement of violators continued to be little to none for over two years. The early reporting on STR's in New Orleans, which began in 2014, featured article after article discussing issues of legality. In an article published shortly before the CZO vote, Robert McClendon and Katherine Sayre posed the question: "Should the rentals be embraced as legal, taxable and regulated? Or should they be outright banned?" (2014)

Few people believed that STR's should be banned entirely, and nearly everyone, it seemed, was in favor of responsible legalization and regulation – it was just the definition of "responsible" that caused animosity between different groups. The Alliance for Neighborhood Prosperity (ANP), a group of homeowners and property managers in New Orleans who lobbied for loose regulations, were in favor of policies that maximized their flexibility as propertied homeowners and hosts. Local fair housing organizations, such as the Jane Place Neighborhood Sustainability Initiative (JPNSI), argued that loose regulations were harmful to neighborhoods and cultural traditions, and disproportionately so when it came to low-income communities and communities of color (JPNSI 2018). In order to effectively regulate and enforce, the city needed comprehensive and reliable data on who was listing STR's and where they were. In turn, Airbnb seemed generally content to let the ANP speak on its behalf in New Orleans, but – citing privacy concerns – it took a reluctant stance in terms of sharing its proprietary data with the city and city residents.

On August 11, 2016, after a nearly 7-hour long public hearing during which critics and advocates of STR's voiced their concerns, the CPC recommended an STR regulatory structure to City Council that included: 1) the requirement of a license for all STR units, 2) a ban on full-time year-round rentals, 3) a thirty-day maximum on whole-home rentals annually, and 4) a density limit for each block, varying based on the zoning of the block in question. In drafting their recommendation, the CPC cited concerns over maintaining "neighborhood character, especially in Historic Core neighborhoods" like Treme, Marigny, and Bywater. "Regulations," they wrote, "must ensure that short term rentals are not overly concentrated in these neighborhoods, especially in the residential districts of these neighborhoods" (Planning Commission 2016, 24-25). They were clear in their rejection of a proposal for "Principal Residential" licenses, which would have allowed for "entire houses to be converted to vacation rentals year-round" (Sayre 2016). In short, the CPC was attendant in its decision to the cultural and economic strain that unregulated STR's might place on the neighborhoods in which they operate, recommending that the City Council legalize STR's under the condition that certain strictures were in place to limit the frequency of rentals and the density of listings.

On October 20, 2016, the City Council voted to legalize STR's, choosing not to adopt two key recommendations from the CPC: the density limit per block face, and the 30-day annual cap on whole-home rentals. In the accepted version of STR regulations, the annual cap on whole-home rentals was extended to 90 days, and there was no limit enshrined on density per block face. The decision to excise those parameters from the new regulations was ostensibly because the CPC's proposal would make enforcement too difficult, but it is also worth noting that the ANP lobbied the CPC and the City Council for two years leading up to the vote, including personal campaign donations to City Council members and an economic impact report commissioned from the University of New Orleans (McClendon 2014, Allman and Woodward 2017).

After the regulations were in place, the Safety & Permits department consciously sought to cultivate a panoptic landscape of enforcement. Ron described that the Safety & Permits cars, for example, "just had the little city seal before." However, after the regulations were adopted, the cars had been rebranded and relabeled more prominently in order to send a message that "they know we are out there, they know we are looking."

Ron even noted that the department "had [the cars] reroute to make them present in the neighborhood." His explanation of enforcement harkened to Foucault's panopticon, or the techniques for inducing a "state of conscious and permanent visibility that assures the automatic functioning of power" (1975, 201). Interestingly, however, in the case of the Safety & Permits enforcing new STR laws, the functioning of power was both juridical and performative. Ron explained, "We went into this knowing that the success of this program highly depends on the faith that the neighborhood has in the way we administer… [it] was very important, that the neighbors know we are there." In addition to encouraging the desired behavior of STR hosts, the Safety & Permits department was putting on something of a show, a performative panopticism, which neighbors could observe and by which they could, in theory, be soothed.

The degree to which enforcement has been successful is still unclear, and this is largely due to Airbnb's anonymization of data it provided to the city.[23] As of August 2, 2017, the city had handed out $115,000 in fines. However, most of these were against listings in the French Quarter, which were easy to identify and penalize because the new regulations deemed all STR's illegal in the French Quarter. Enforcing and penalizing hosts across the entire city for exceeding the 90-day annual limit on whole-home rentals has proven far more difficult. When Ron was asked how the data that Airbnb provided could be used for enforcement, he explained:

> "Airbnb has to give us two sets of data. One is the name, address, all of that good stuff. The other is the number of nights listed. *The two cannot be matched*. They are more than happy to share the specific information that's outlined, but no more, and as for the rental information, it comes with an anonymized ID that's, I don't know, twenty-four characters long, um, and doesn't match anything, we've tried it. Um, but the way it's resolved are these [thump]: stacks and stacks of administrative subpoenas.

After having audibly thumped upon the desk before me,[24] the "stacks and stacks" of one hundred and thirty administrative subpoenas, each one a lengthy document, they were to be mailed to STR platforms like Airbnb and HomeAway in the hopes that those companies would produce the proper information so that the

[23] In providing data at all, Airbnb was cooperating more than other STR platforms. HomeAway, for example, refused to provide any proprietary data that might streamline the city's enforcement process.
[24] I want to be clear: the stack of administrative subpoenas was so large that upon being dropped it did in fact produce a thump, loud and audible enough to be prominently captured on my recording device.

department could successfully enforce. To date, however, the administrative subpoena has only been marginally successful in the identification of violators (Adelson 2018). The new regulations have been roundly critiqued: by affordable housing advocates for being too lenient, and by groups like the ANP for being too strict. "Nobody was happy," one of my interviewees mused, "and that's how you know it was a good compromise."

In the transition out of a pre-regulation discursive regime of *tolerated illegalities*, in which the practice of short-term renting was widespread, forbidden, but unenforced, the post-regulatory enforcement of STR's became situated within a discursive regime of what I call *intolerable legalities*. For example, the regulations allow for a building in the Bywater "that is 100% short-term rental." According to Ron, it was "developed as eight or nine condos to be sold," but the "developers decided to hang on to it… and basically they can operate as a hotel." He acknowledged that "neighbors are not particularly happy about it," but at the end of day, "that's the quirk of the zoning map." In this Foucauldian turn of phrase from tolerated illegalities from intolerable legalities, I attempt to refocus the lens of inquiry, from the enforcers and the mechanisms of (non-) enforcement to the broader social milieu of people and organizations that deem those mechanisms intolerable. Going forward, the city's regulations will continue to be updated and edited, informed equally by neighbors, critics, and hotel-lobbying groups that want to see regulations tightened and groups like the ANP who want to see regulations loosened – all of whom see these laws from their own vantage points of intolerability.

4.4. Strange bedfellows (or, an unexpected coffee date)

During my fieldwork in New Orleans, alongside many other visitors to the city, I used ride-hailing apps such as Uber and Lyft. These are commonly used platforms, especially by Airbnb guests whose listings are located in residential areas all across New Orleans. Both ride-hailing platforms are fairly ubiquitous to the city; Uber and Lyft are each advertised on the New Orleans tourism website, and as of June 2017, they also operate in official contracts with the Louis Armstrong Airport (i.e., when passengers hail a cab

through these ride-hailing platforms, there is always already a fleet waiting outside of the terminal for passengers to be taken to New Orleans proper) (Craig 2017). As digital on-demand platforms, ride-hailing and home-sharing services tend to cater to a similar audience, and many of the Uber and Lyft drivers I rode with spoke of regularly dropping off Airbnb guests at their rentals in residential neighborhoods. In this way, Uber and Lyft drivers are familiar with certain behaviors and mobilities of Airbnb guests.

One of my interviewees, Jerry, was an Uber driver whom I met while traveling from the Bywater to the French Quarter. I would often try to strike up conversations with these drivers by telling them that I was visiting for research. When I told Jerry that I was studying Airbnb, his first words were, "I've only got one thing to say: fuck those motherfuckers." Jerry did, in fact, had more to say that just that: he spent the rest of the five-minute car ride divulging strong opinions about the platform – namely, his ire toward Airbnb for what he perceived as its tendency to displace long-term residents from their neighborhoods. Upon my leaving the car, Jerry produced a small, white business card for me to take. Emblazoned in a serif font was his name, his phone number, and on the other side, the words: "Your Man in *New Orleans*" (emphasis original).

I later conducted a semi-structured interview with Jerry, who is a retired white man in his sixties. Jerry reported that earlier that year he had detected a pattern in the quality of the Airbnb listings at which he dropped off visitors to the city. He felt that the buildings were either structurally decrepit, or otherwise located in what he considered "bad, dangerous parts of town." Growing frustrated with taking tourists to these places, he reached a tipping point when he brought a family to a house that was "cattywampus," the floor "on a thirty degree angle," and the homes on either side "half burned out" and "overrun by weeds." His response was to order a set of business cards and begin distributing them to his Uber passengers. According to Jerry:

> "I started [the business cards] because I took three separate people to, uh, Airbnbs, and I wouldn't wanna bury garbage where I dropped 'em off. … [I thought] I'm gonna try and get ahead of this, pass them out to people so they can have their friends give me a call, and I can do a little research for 'em, you know – but in person instead of like online. And then I can say, 'Well I don't know if I'd wanna live there, because the house is crappy.'"

His goal was ostensibly to help guarantee that Airbnb guests would have an enjoyable experience in a safe home. However, Jerry's concern for safety was borne from deeply racialized views of crime, incarceration, and policing.

My interview with Jerry was conducted in three parts: 1) driving to a coffee shop in the Bywater, 2) at the coffee shop, and 3) driving back from the coffee shop. In driving to the coffee shop from my Uptown apartment, we had to cross the I-10 expressway. This expressway, completed in 1968, demolished a large stretch of Claiborne Avenue in the middle of Treme. The construction destroyed one of the longest continuous segments of live oaks in the nation, as well as an expanse of black-owned businesses that had been constructed along Claiborne as a result of Jim Crow-era segregation laws (Crutcher 2010). The neutral ground of Claiborne Avenue between Orleans and St. Bernard Avenues – a pair of streets between which fifty years ago there flourished business and foliage – is now a wide alley of pillared concrete.

Claiborne Avenue is still a popular spot for local congregation, picnics, and jazz funerals. As one man told me while I was walking through Treme on a particularly hot day, "It's the only place in this neighborhood you can find any shade." In 2002, as an act of reclamation, the New Orleans African-American Museum facilitated a mass painting of the pillars through their "Restore the Oaks" project. Some pillars now bear the likeness of famous jazz musicians from Treme, while others are painted with the tangled fingers of oak tree branches, in memoriam of the ones that used to line the road. One striking pillar shows an angry white mob carrying a picket sign that reads, "SEGREGATION FOREVER" (See Figure 4.1).

As we crossed the expressway, Jerry (unprompted by me) indicated toward the Louis Armstrong Cemetery, a famous Treme landmark: "See, now we're in that part of town that's called the Treme." He went on to lambast the romanticized image of Treme that has been produced and marketed through tourism and television, from its claim as the first African-American neighborhood to its eponymous HBO series. Jerry was skeptical of these representations:

Figure 4.1: The painted pillars along Claiborne Avenue (photos by author).

> "The narrative is this: the Treme is the cultural center of the African-American community. It may very well be. I'm not African-American, I didn't live here, but I can tell you this. A lot of the Airbnbs in the Treme – and there are a lot – I think are owned by out of town white people who don't really understand that the Treme is not a really warm and welcoming and safe place to everybody. And that part of the whole Airbnb is completely neglected. Some of these places are just in bad, dangerous parts of town."

It is important to note the underlying justification voiced by Jerry against Airbnb listings in Treme: he was not concerned out of fear for the livelihood of Treme *residents*, but rather out of fear for the safety of *tourists*. In voicing this concern, Jerry deploys a common critique of Airbnb – that many of the listings are owned and operated by out-of-town owners with multiple whole-home rentals – but his reasons for leveraging that critique are in radically different interests than those of, say, affordable housing advocacy groups or neighborhood associations. Michael Crutcher has detailed how Jerry's "negative associations" of Treme, far from unique, are driven largely by racialized perceptions of the neighborhood (Crutcher 2010, 18). In fact, Jerry's distribution of the business cards is an ironic echo of Victor Green's *Negro Motorist Green Book*. Between 1936 and 1966, Green published a travel guide for African-Americans, which black motorists could reference to avoid places where they might encounter racist or threatening behavior (sundown towns, unfriendly or racist mechanics, etc) – in other words, it was a reference for staying safe during their travels.

During our return trip from the coffee shop, Jerry began discussing crime in New Orleans in a racially charged discourse, explaining that he interpreted the city's crime problem as a function of blackness:

> "The problems in New Orleans are committed by young black men, and some of 'em have guns, and shoot up shit, and some of 'em rob and beat people up, and it's almost as if people don't want to accept that you have a problem with crime, and that the problem is these black, young black men. … all of the crime, most of the crime committed in New Orleans is committed by black people."

Of course, Jerry's perception of black men as criminals is entangled with the disenfranchising effects of gentrification and tourism: as Gladstone and Préau note, "In New Orleans, the threatening native is more often than not a poor black male who is more likely to lose his home as the tourist bubble expands out of the downtown area and into the surrounding neighborhoods" (2008, 158). Jerry described a sort of cultural impasse between "the white world and the black world." He offered a paraphrase of the

poem by Rudyard Kipling in saying, "[It's] sort of like the East and West… East is East and West is West and never the twain shall meet."[25] While he conceded (after my prompting) that it was possible to "make… the black and white meet," he said that "it takes a lot of action on both sides – it's not all one way." His suggestions for alleviating the problem of crime in New Orleans ranged from individual to state interventions, and were all racially charged: he supported stop-and-frisk policing, suggested that high-school dropout "thugs" enlist in the military, and encouraged putting more people in jail (acknowledging, in the same sentence, that Louisiana is already the most incarcerated state per capita in the nation).

I am particularly interested in that all of this was borne from a conversation about Airbnb. It reflects two common themes that arose in a number of my interviews and experiences during fieldwork: 1) Airbnb as a signifier of some larger issue (racial divisions, gentrification, etc.) and 2) the production of strange bedfellows in defense of/opposition to Airbnb. While discussing Airbnb, many of my respondents would veer naturally into discussions of things like corruption in the local government, gentrification, or policies that prioritize tourists over residents. This was not a divergence, but a segue: the topic of Airbnb functioned as a jumping-off point for people to discuss larger sociopolitical issues within which they felt the Airbnb debate was subsumed, or rather, of which they felt the Airbnb debate was representative. For Jerry, Airbnb was emblematic of issues associated with crime, blackness, and how the relationship between those two things is mitigated (both by individuals and by the state). Second, Jerry's beliefs reflect the strange bedfellows that result from joint opposition to Airbnb. Despite his racist attitude toward crime in New Orleans, Jerry's disavowal of how Airbnb listings proliferate in small neighborhoods would position him agreeably with many of the city's anti-racist activists, albeit for different reasons. As such, the issue of Airbnb tended to create unexpected alliances – for example, when small neighborhood associations and big hotel lobbying groups advocate in unison for STR regulations. Jerry believed that guests using Airbnb should be conscientious about the neighborhoods in which they selected to stay, a sentiment echoed by many neighborhood associations and affordable housing

[25] Notably, Kipling was a white British man born in India and a shameless advocate for imperialism (i.e., his poem "The White Man's Burden" famously attempts to justify colonization as a noble and civilizing endeavor).

groups. However, while neighborhood activists were concerned about impact on locals, Jerry's concerns were for the welfare of tourists because homes were being listed on Airbnb in black neighborhoods.

In this chapter, I have drawn on interviews and experiences from fieldwork to locate and analyze a variety of discourses. Specifically, I have identified the main discourses that pertain to STR's in New Orleans as: gentrification, the neighborhood fabric, the guilty host, tolerated illegalities, intolerable legalities, and strange bedfellows. Some of these discourses can be leveraged simultaneously in defense of and in critique of the proliferation of STR's (for example, gentrification as displacement or gentrification as revitalization). In other cases, the discourses about Airbnb and STR's served to stand in for larger issues that afflicted the city, such as crime. However these discourses were mobilized, they seemed to represent people's desires and wishes for a particular kind of urban imaginary – an imaginary that was in some cases helped and in some cases hindered by STR's in the city. In the following chapters, I will draw on these discourses in my formulations of authority and authenticity for Airbnb.

CHAPTER 5.

LOCATING AUTHORITY: GOOGLE, AIRBNB, AND REPRODUCING "THE 73"

In this chapter, I explore some of the mechanisms through which power and authority are enacted in the landscape of New Orleans. While this thesis focuses in large part on concepts about authenticity, I detailed in Chapter 2 some of the shortcomings of authenticity as an analytic framework. Following Bruner, "The concept of *authority* serves as a corrective to misuses of the term *authenticity*, because in raising the issue of who authenticates, the nature of the discussion is changed" (1994, 408). In other words, in understanding how space is reproduced, by whom, and for whom, the concern is less with *how authentic* something is than who has *authority to authenticate* that thing. As such, I spend this chapter discussing how authority can shape authenticity and, vice versa, the urban political implications such processes might have. In doing so, I take a step back from interviews, and turn instead to neighborhood boundaries as they are represented and re-presented in spatial media like Google and Airbnb. Here, I argue that the drawing of neighborhood boundaries in Airbnb has both cultural and economic value for the places represented by such boundaries.

5.1. The power of boundaries: coded space and knowledge politics

> "Ask 10 Americans to delineate "the South," for instance, and you'll get 10 different maps, some including Missouri, others slicing Texas in half, still others emphatically lopping off the Florida peninsula. None are precise, yet all are accurate. It is a fascinating, glorious mess."
>
> -Richard Campanella, *A Glorious Mess*

The construction of boundaries and borders has always been a contested process. As noted by Richard Campanella in the epigraph above, understandings of space – especially regional space with little to no "official" designation – are subjective. When brought together, those understandings tend to be brilliantly messy, and the urban neighborhoods of New Orleans are no exception. New Orleans neighborhood names often conjure up particular imaginaries for the places to which they refer: even those who have never visited the city might recognize Treme as the "birthplace of jazz," or the French Quarter

as home to Bourbon Street, or the hip, artsy vibes of the Marigny and Bywater. Of course, these neighborhoods contain more than just their popular representations, and the actual physical spaces to which the names refer are fluid, changing, and near impossible to pin down.

However, when it comes to digital spatial media, software developers must make decisions for how to represent neighborhood boundaries. Many times, developers will choose to "encode neighborhoods as discrete, named polygons, composed of linear boundaries enclosing homogenous areas" (Payne 2017, 2). The notion that software and code are implicated in the reproduction of everyday life has been long observed (Thrift and French 2002), but to this end, Kitchin and Dodge provide the most useful framework. Following Kitchin and Dodge, Will Payne argues that decisions to draw neighborhood boundaries produce a particular kind of "coded space" (2017, 4): space where "software makes a difference to the transduction of spatiality but the relationship between code and space is not mutually constituted" (Kitchin and Dodge 2011, 18). Indeed, neighborhood polygons in digital media are not as reliant on code as, say, airports, wherein the "production of space is dependent on code" (Kitchin and Dodge 2011, 17). Still, how boundaries are drawn in digital media is "increasingly mediating the way people understand, navigate, and value urban space" (Payne 2017, 4). For example, in their web applications, Airbnb and Google Maps both draw a version of New Orleans neighborhoods that represents a "total view of the city, with named, non-overlapping polygonal neighborhood boundaries" (Payne 2017, 2). In fact, as seen in Figure 5.1, Airbnb actually uses a Google base map in its web application for searching available listings. This is not an insignificant fact, as Google Maps relies on a top-down, authoritative process to configure the boundaries within its base map.

In these kinds of spatial media, Payne points out that labels for neighborhood "don't just tell you where you are – they help call that 'where' into existence" (2017, 1).[26] These boundaries are embedded in what Foucault would call discursive regimes of power (Kitchin and Dodge 2011, 19). Of course, as demonstrated in Section 3.2, power is also inextricably related to knowledge. Elwood and Leszczynski have shown how examining

[26] Similarly, to paraphrase the artist Paul Klee – who once said, "Art does not reproduce the visible, it makes visible" – maps don't just reflect the visible: they render visible.

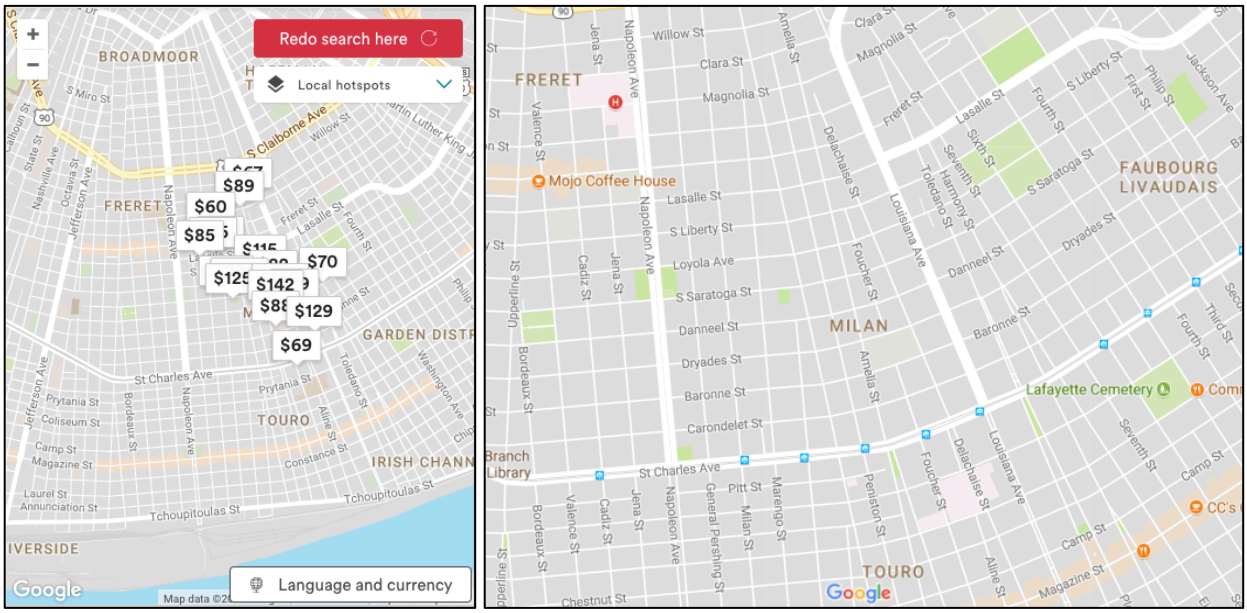

Figure 5.1: Airbnb's web application to search listings (Left), and a screenshot of the Google Maps interface in which it is based (Right).

spatial media is a good avenue to understand "knowledge politics," or the "epistemological strategies for establishing the legitimacy and authority of knowledge claims" (2013, 544). Who has the authority to name and delineate neighborhood boundaries is one such example of knowledge politics. In applications like Airbnb and Google Maps, boundaries are perceived to be official and authoritative, but such boundaries also *call forth* the perception of authority itself: boundaries are intimately connected with how users of these spatial media form their own spatial knowledge of the places they traverse.

Airbnb has ostensibly taken different kinds of local knowledge into account in the development of its web application. As Airbnb's Engineering & Data Science team puts it, the goal is to help users "understand a place without ever having been there" (Shoff 2015). Airbnb employs a staff cartographer, who "researches historical and current data, talks with folks from the community, and answers emails from hosts to build a clear image of how locals understand their world" (Shoff 2015). However, it is unclear to what degree this occurs in New Orleans, where the digital representation of neighborhoods in Airbnb's interface differs negligibly from that in Google Maps. For Airbnb, the project of helping its users understand a place without having been there "reveals the increased

importance of subdividing and branding space for those who intend to profit from its sale or lease" (Payne 2017, 4).

In order to understand the manifold implications of bounded space for neighborhoods in New Orleans, it is important to historicize the construction of what are popularly understood as the city's neighborhood boundaries and neighborhood names. Here, I review how neighborhoods in New Orleans were produced and their boundaries ossified through various mechanisms of urban planning, the most notable being GIS shapefiles (Campanella 2014). I then reprise critiques of GIS through the 1990's and beyond (Schuurman 2000, Kwan 2002) to challenge the authority of the official neighborhood boundaries that circulate in digital media like Google Maps and Airbnb. Finally, I describe how the production of a dominant neighborhood shapefile operates as a technique of securitization, which Crampton defines as "the efforts made to anchor, control, and discipline" our ways of knowing geographically (Crampton 2009, 5). In contrast to Haraway's call for feminist objectivity, which emphasizes the need for a "politics of engaged, accountable positioning" in knowledge production, such securitization works to re-inscribe a top-down spatial epistemology of New Orleans via Airbnb's web application (Haraway 1988, 590). In closing, I argue that neighborhood names and boundaries have cultural *and* economic value; as such, the task of representing (in digital spatial media) and re-presenting (to locals and tourists) those names and boundaries is problematic when limited to organizations deemed "authoritative."

5.2. Producing "The 73"

Founded in 1718, New Orleans is an old American city. However, it did not begin to grow significantly until the Louisiana Purchase was completed in 1803. The 19th century was subsequently a time of trial and spatial error in New Orleans. In 1836, the city was partitioned into three municipalities, which were divided along more or less ethnic lines and were, for all intents and purposes, politically autonomous. This system quickly failed, in large part due to the Economic Panic of 1837 and the subsequent tanking of New Orleans' credit rating. By 1852, the tripartite government had been forced to reconvene, reunify, and implement something else. The following solution, a new system of "wards,"

divided neighborhoods by population density instead of ethnic settlement (Campanella 2014). New Orleans continued creating new wards as it annexed territory until 1880.

These urban forms shifted again in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, when a new epistemology of cities was emerging: an urban planning "as definite a science as pure engineering." Some engineers claimed, "the best way to secure a city plan which will be lastingly satisfactory from all points of view… is to put the work in charge of several experts" (Ford 1913, 551) – and New Orleans was no exception to this trend. The organization of cities was becoming more and more, as Crampton might say, "securitized" (2009). In accord with the broader professional planning movement to "minimize conflict" in land use and "maximize property values," early 20th century New Orleans went through a series of efforts to manage and control urban growth (Campanella 2014). For example, a 1921 zoning ordinance "stipulated that blacks could not occupy a house in a white block or a white person in a black block unless the prospective occupant obtained written permission of a majority of residents already in the block" (Silver 1991, 197-198). Racial zoning policies like this were echoed in the practice of redlining, beginning in the 1930's, which attempted to racially code neighborhoods as "high risk" or "low risk" to prevent African-American families from getting home mortgages. Other efforts to foster an efficient landscape for data analysis included the City Planning and Zoning Commission's establishment in 1923, and the writing of the Handbook to Comprehensive Zoning Law in 1929 (Campanella 2014). Rich Campanella identifies the publication of this Handbook to be the "first fill attempt at planner-driven neighborhood delineation" (Campanella 2014). In any case, it is clear that by the early 20th century, the task of urban organization – and sometimes, of neighborhood boundary-making – was increasingly falling to urban planners instead of neighborhood residents.

Perhaps the most enduring case of neighborhood boundary ossification occurred in 1974, at the hands of city pollster Allen Rosenzweig. On behalf of the New Orleans Office of Policy Planning, Rosenzweig conducted a survey of residents across the city, which asked for (among other things) "the name they used to describe the neighborhood where they lived." The data was processed into a collection of 73 "planning areas," some of which proved more difficult to name than others. For example, the neighborhood toponym "Black Pearl" – which still exists as an official neighborhood – was derived

from the fact that one riverfront area's predominantly black population intersected with Pearl Street. Tongue-in-cheek, Campanella refers to these formalized boundaries as "The 73," writing: "neighborhoods declared to be 'Milan,' 'Touro,' 'West Riverside,' 'Audubon/University' and 'Freret'" were "likely news to most of their residents" (Campanella 2014).

Though modified slightly over the years, The 73 remain in use for official planning and zoning purposes. Today, they are called "Neighborhood Statistical Areas." What demands our attention is not that these boundaries exist, but *how they are used*, and the fact that those statistical boundaries often come to stand in for all neighborhood differentiation in the city. Indeed, from official maps to t-shirts and Pinterest boards, The 73 can be found in various popular representations of New Orleans (see Figure 5.2). Campanella argues that such efforts to harden distinctions between neighborhoods can have a damaging effect on "cultural expressiveness" (2014). Neighborhood boundaries in New Orleans were always fluid and subjected to both physical and perceptual transformations, but the adoption of an official spatial narrative tends to elide such nuance.

In the 1990's and beyond, the advent of "GIS files downloaded freely over the internet" further concretized these sometimes-arbitrary neighborhood polygons as official boundaries in the public imaginary (Campanella 2014). As Campanella notes, "GIS files of official neighborhoods from the City Planning Commission carried with them an ordained sense of indisputable truth that won over many insiders and nearly all outsiders." However, the notion that GIS operates as a neutral and objective way of seeing the world has been long-challenged by critical geographers. Nadine Schuurman has detailed the critiques that were leveraged at ontologies, epistemologies, and methodologies of GIS, which can be distilled to 1) its design as a positivist tool, 2) its perceived inadequacy in the realm of knowledge production, and 3) its proclivity for Cartesian methodologies (2000, 570).

Feminist scholars of GIS have been particularly critical of the notion that GIS was an objective tool, but are also careful not to reduce those arguments to a mere dichotomy. Kwan (2002), for example, suggests that GIS can be critically engaged in ways that are not strictly positivist or empiricist. Following Spivak, Schuurman and Pratt (2002)

Figure 5.2: An artistic mapping of New Orleans neighborhoods on a t-shirt (Left); the official 73 neighborhood boundaries (Right, map by author). (https://static.shoplightspeed.com/shops/603785/files/003515641/nola-neighborhoods-tee.jpg)

encourage academics and critics of GIS to ask themselves, "[What] would criticisms of GIS look like if the attitude of the critic shifted from one of exposing error to a careful study of the production of truth?" (2002, 296) Much of this engagement was borne of feminist work in science studies; of particular note is Donna Haraway's call to reclaim science by resisting the totalized "false vision" of the god's eye trick, which she calls a feminist objectivity via "situated knowledges" (Haraway 1988, 581-582).

Despite the work of critical and feminist geographers, sheer quantification still remains an ostensibly superior approach to urban planning and governance. Shannon Mattern notes how the prevailing epistemology of tech companies and local governments in our current moment is to view the "*city as computer*," an appealing notion "because it frames the messiness of urban life as programmable and subject to order" (2017). Shelton et al's work on the "actually existing smart city" implores us to think not about the "idealised but unrealised vision" of a "smart city" that often "dominates the social imaginary," but rather about the "existing spatial constellations of urban governance and

built environments" (2014, 2). Indeed, one such example of actually existing spatial constellations is the proliferation of a single GIS shapefile that has come to stand in for all neighborhood differentiation.

How might we recalibrate the lens of spatial knowledge politics to capture a broader interpretation of space? In their ethnographic work, Elwood (2001) and Boll-Bosse and Hankins (2017) have shown the power of participatory mapping for neighborhood-based civic engagement. Taking a cue, I look to self-reported neighborhood organizations (SRNO's) in New Orleans as a proxy for (or at least something closer to) Haraway's situated knowledges. Neighborhood organizations, a common political configuration in New Orleans, are a type of civic engagement group in which neighborhood residents form partnerships and work toward their stated political goal (historical integrity, maintaining community, civic betterment, etc). In order to make themselves politically legible, these organizations must draw boundaries around what they consider to be their neighborhoods. The New Orleans government makes a shapefile of these neighborhood organization boundaries available online. While recognizing that any boundary is a contingent product of power relations, these organizational boundaries represented a spatial knowledge that was generated from the bottom-up, by these small, neighborhood-based political groups. SRNO's demonstrate how a shapefile of The 73 aligns quite jaggedly with other local interpretations of how neighborhoods are mapped. In the following section, I turn to the Treme neighborhood and compare its SRNO's with a more "securitized" vision of New Orleans neighborhoods as it represented in Google Maps.

5.3. Interpretations of Treme in digital spatial media

Like most urban neighborhoods, Treme starts and stops in different places depending on whom you ask. In the context of the Treme neighborhood, Michael Crutcher spends a significant amount of time discussing neighborhood boundary delineation. He acknowledges three ways in which boundaries matter generally: first, that "boundaries help determine control of and access to resources"; second, that "boundaries may be drawn with reference to architecture, traditions, or history"; and third, that boundaries "matter to people, as neighborhoods can be a basis for identity formation" (2010, 13).

When it comes to Treme, Crutcher concedes, "The neighborhood's only undisputed boundary is Rampart Street. Other than that, no consensus exists" (15). Considering the cultural and economic value that neighborhood names and boundaries have, what a bounded area is called – and as a result what is included or excluded from such a polygon – takes on serious meaning.

Turning to Google Maps, a search for "Treme" will return a boundary called "Treme-Lafitte," whose polygon corresponds to the same one available from New Orleans' GIS repository. In this case, it is not clear – especially to an unfamiliar eye – where Treme ends and where Lafitte begins and if there is even a difference between the two (see Figure 5.3). What we see on Google's base map is populated through what Google calls a Base Map Partner Program. According to the Program's terms, "in order to provide our users with the best, most up-to-date map possible, [Google] must partner with the most *comprehensive* and *authoritative* data sources" (Google 2017, emphasis mine). "If your organization has authoritative vector data that would substantially improve the base map in Google," they write, "we would like to hear from you." The website also showcases a series of "examples of how we've improved our U.S. base map with authoritative data sources." In this regard, Google leans heavily on credentialed organizations like city governments and federal services (i.e., USGS, NPS) for their spatial datasets. Whether the data for New Orleans was supplied by an "authoritative" institution through the Base Map Partner Program or acquired from an open data portal, it seems likely that a shapefile of The 73 underwrites Google's base map. Furthermore, the Program's solicitation for authoritative data illuminates on the processes by which data is authenticated and deemed valuable.

When looking instead to SRNO's as the default delineation of space, a different story emerges. As of this writing, there are no fewer than 214 autonomous SRNO's in New Orleans, and they map chaotically upon one another (see Figure 5.4). Lines splay and crisscross, territory is claimed by multiple organizations, and trying to tease through the overlapping boundaries of each organization is nearly impossible. Specifically, the Historic Faubourg Treme Association (HFTA) draws a much smaller territory for Treme than does Google: "between North Rampart street [sic] and North Claiborne Avenue, and then from St. Bernard Avenue and Basin Street/Orleans Avenue" (HFTA, "About Us").

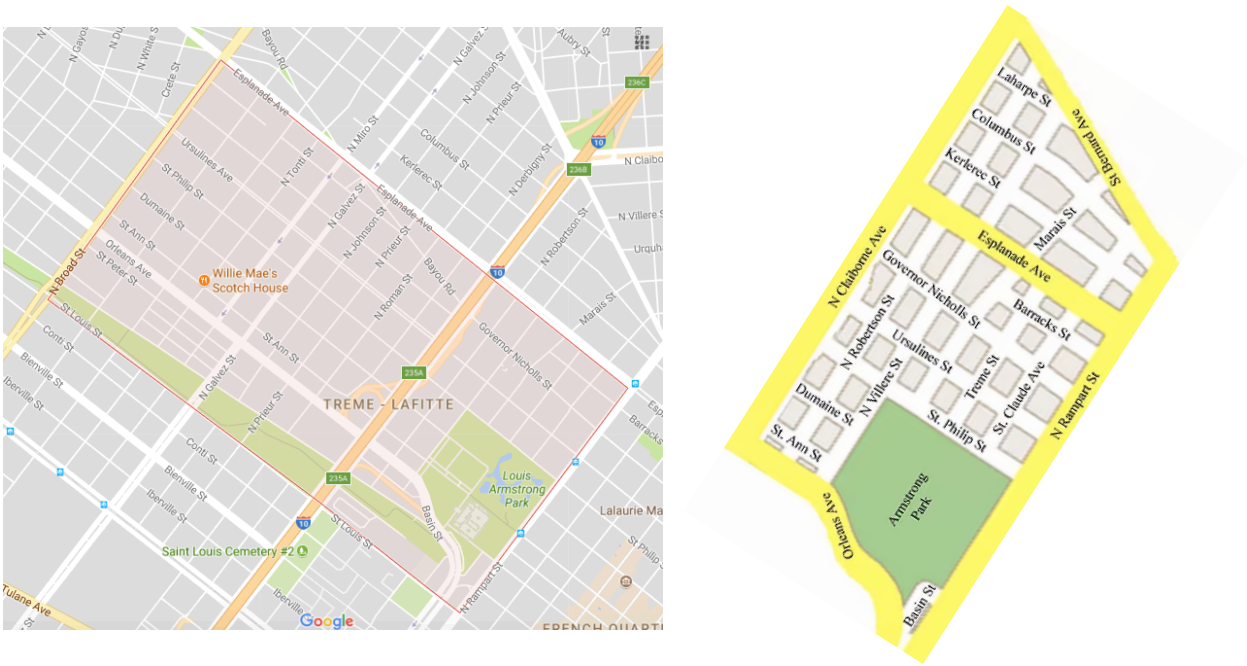

Figure 5.3: Google search for Treme (Left); the boundaries of Historic Treme, per the Historic Faubourg Treme Association (Right).

Figure 5.4: Self-reported neighborhood organizations in New Orleans; compare to neighborhood statistical areas in Figure 5.2.

This mapping was more consistent with my interviewees who lived in Treme, many of whom indicated that they considered their neighborhood bounded by Rampart and Claiborne, instead of the official neighborhood boundary that extends Treme about ten more blocks lakeside (see Figure 5.3). For example, one respondent described the area north of Claiborne as "other Treme," while another said "my boundary of Treme is from Rampart to Claiborne." One of the hosts I interviewed pointed out that the "area below the interstate and above Rampart is kind of its own section in terms of real estate."

Of course, just like Google, the HFTA still provides a partial rather than exhaustive mapping of Treme. For example, although three of the 214 available SRNO's refer to Treme, none uses the *same interpretation* of Treme. The Historic Faubourg Treme Association draws a different neighborhood shape than the Esplanade Ridge/Treme Civic Association, both of which draw different boundaries than the Greater Treme Consortium, Inc. (see Figure 5.4). Furthermore, the cultural politics affiliated with each of these organizations are varied and far from entirely representative the neighborhoods they represent politically. Formed in the wake of Hurricane Katrina, the HFTA's mission statement is to "care for our neighborhood by speaking with one voice and acting collectively to keep Tremé safe, beautiful, clean and free of blight." However, according to Sakaneeny, the HFTA has also worked with police in order to "enforce noise ordinances and oppose the issuance of permits for venues offering live music indoors and more informal gatherings outdoors" (from Parekh 2015, 216). According to Trushna Parekh, while the HFTA is "committed to preserving historical structures, their perspective on local musical traditions as "noise," and their notions of safety as greater policing reconstruct the cultural space of the neighborhood in a manner that is disruptive to longstanding rituals and ways of life – resulting in the closure and limitation of neighborhood bar traditions" (2015, 216-217). To speak with "one voice," as the HFTA proclaims to do, is perhaps an effective political strategy; and yet, it risks problematically casting Treme as a "monolith" rather than accounting for the neighborhood's multitude of "communities" (Crutcher 2010, 7).

Rather than map a truer or more accurate New Orleans, what these SRNO's demonstrate is the perceptual ambiguity of place and the fiction of well-defined borders. Such chaos of geometry is certainly what Campanella meant when he said "a glorious

mess"; however, despite this diversity of spatial knowledge, the boundary of Treme-Lafitte – per The 73 – is the one reproduced and legitimized in official planning and zoning procedures, and most recently in Google Maps and Airbnb. What I am more interested in highlighting here are the specific mechanisms by which a particular moment of urban planning has gained authority and has been reproduced in and through the digital landscape of New Orleans. The practical effects of this range from incorporating more space into Treme proper, increasing the locations tourists are willing to visit in the neighborhood, and delimits the neighborhoods that are impacted by Airbnb.

5.4. Airbnb and the cultural value of neighborhoods

As was discussed at length in Chapter 4, the critiques of Airbnb orbit largely around the issues of gentrification and neighborhood change. Another effect is that by using a Google base map in its web application for searching available listings, Airbnb tacitly affirms a top-down definition of the neighborhoods of New Orleans for the 267,000 guests who used to platform to visit in 2016 (Litten 2016). This is not harmful per se, but instead it demonstrates where authority and the ability to draw neighborhood boundaries is concentrated. Rather than treating neighborhoods as tenuous sites of spatial knowledge emergent from the bottom up, Airbnb's neighborhood boundaries in New Orleans are derived from a veritable palimpsest of gatekeepers – Rosenzweig's poll transformed into a GIS shapefile, a shapefile loaded into Google's base map, a base map sourced in Airbnb's web application. Still, the question remains, how do these "digitally defined neighborhoods assume importance within contemporary urban politics" (Payne 2017, 4)? I argue that because neighborhood names and boundaries have both cultural *and* economic value, the task of representing (in digital spatial media) and re-presenting (to locals and tourists) those names and boundaries cannot be limited only to organizations deemed "authoritative."

Neighborhood names represent cultural value, and when they are attached to discrete places, such value is transferred. Sharon Zukin is instructive in her discussion of how Williamsburg, a neighborhood in Brooklyn, NY, became "cool." In the 1970's, Williamsburg was a low-rent and "somewhat dangerous" neighborhood, but by the 1990's had been transformed into a "cultural incubator" for "indie music, alternative art,

and trendy restaurant cuisine" (2010; 38, 45). This transformation was driven largely by the influx of white musicians and artists who sought an authentic urban experience, and who enacted through this search for authenticity what Zukin calls a "cultural form of power over space" (2010, xiii). As part of this neighborhood change, Williamsburg saw 1) a shift in demographics from a working-class mixture of whites, blacks, and Puerto Ricans to an ethnically white, cosmopolitan population, and 2) the attraction of a corporate media presence that deemed Williamsburg the "epicenter of cool" (Zukin 2010, 42). Of course, a neighborhood becoming "cool" is not impacted or being driven by the boundary definitions used on Google and Airbnb. Rather, the boundary seeks to spatially delimit what is cool and what is not – and this delineation has cultural and economic effects.

In this context, we can think of cool as more or less synonymous with the framework of authenticity detailed in Section 2.1. In both Zukin's and Campanella's work, they discuss the burdensome effect that affiliations with coolness and authenticity have on real estate markets (i.e., gentrification). For Zukin, the story goes that "Places for cool cultural consumption develop an attractive image in a highly unlikely neighborhood, which then sparks a commercial revival, a residential influx of people with money, and, finally, the building of new luxury apartments with extravagant rents" (Zukin 2010, 37). Zukin describes the temporal rhythm of how a place becomes cool, but as Campanella shows, cool also has a spatial rhythm. For him, coolness "becomes geographical: it occupies certain spaces, disdains others, and seeks new ones when uncoolness approaches" (Campanella 2014). In Campanella's own mental mapping of New Orleans' geography of cool, the coolest and most authentic areas are also generally the most stressed by real estate pressure (see Figure 5.5). Treme is one such place; as detailed in Section 4.1, rents and home values in Treme are rising at a significantly higher rate than in New Orleans as a whole. Cool attracts capital, capital follows cool: and yet, cool is always on the move, running away from its discontents – tackiness, inauthenticity, the unscrubbable stain of being "too touristy."

Drawing on Neil Smith's rent gap theory, Wachsmuth and Weisler have analyzed Airbnb in a similar context. The authors write, "By creating higher potential returns to property through the possibility of short-term rentals, Airbnb produces rent gaps, and

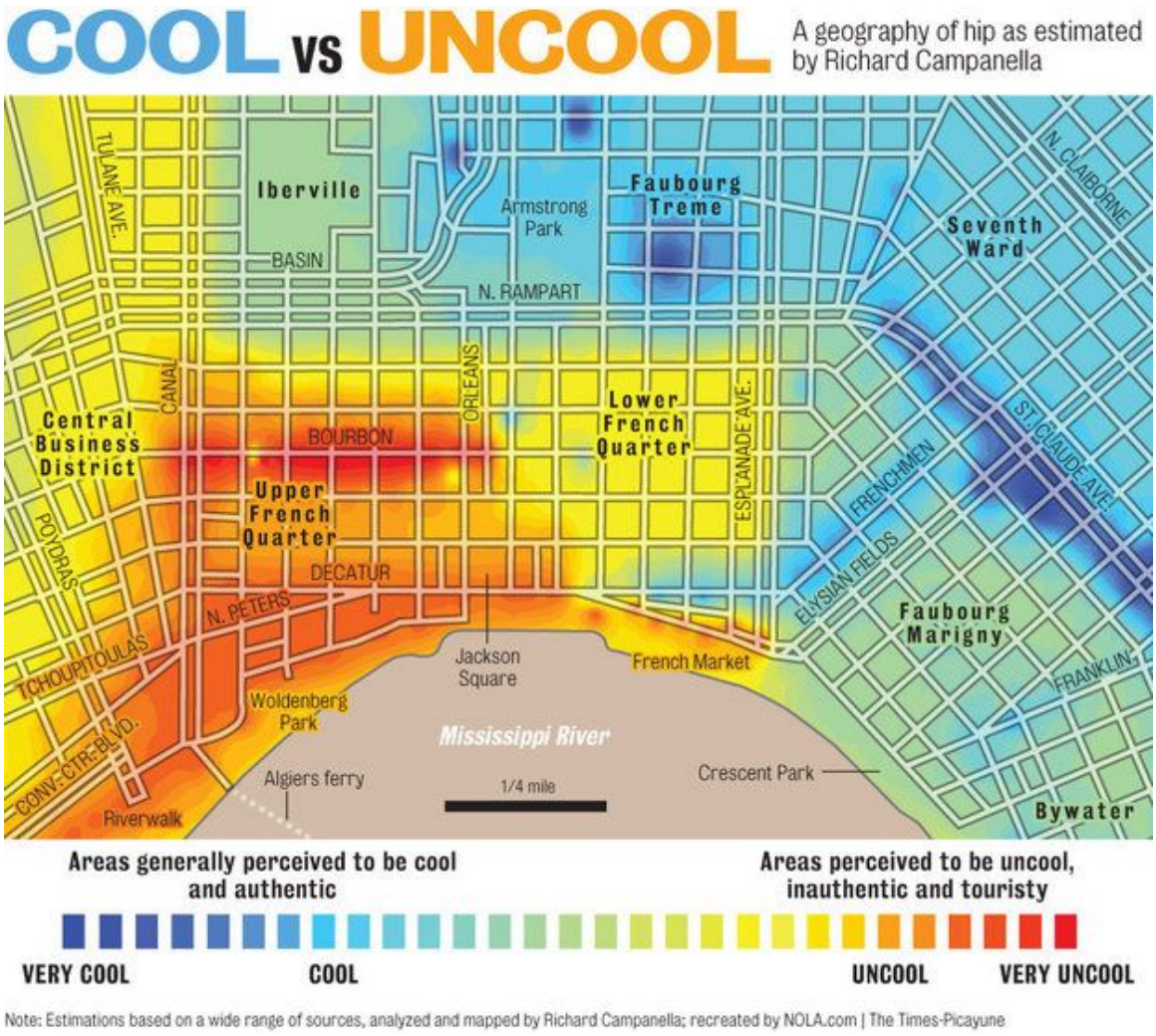

Figure 5.5: Geography of cool in New Orleans

thereby should be expected to drive gentrification and displacement. But the 'opportunity' Airbnb offers to landlords and tenants is highly uneven, because *it directly depends on the magnitude of tourist demand for short-term accommodation*" (Wachsmuth and Weisler 2018, 9; emphasis mine). For Wachsmuth and Weisler, Airbnb has the potential to be a gentrifying force, but only under certain conditions and in certain places – certain neighborhoods with extra-local tourist demand, authentic charm, and a dash of cool. Zukin writes, "Our pursuit of authenticity… fuels rising real estate values" (2010, 18). While I have noted before that it is unclear whether most Airbnb guests are seeking some kind of authentic urban experience, authenticity remains one important factor in the platform's marketing rhetoric and in user's experiences of Airbnb.

What I have argued here is that decisions to represent urban neighborhoods as bounded objects have implications for the cultural and economic value of the areas to which they refer. In the case of Airbnb, neighborhoods boundaries are the product of decisions that reflect a particular top-down knowledge politics, embedded in things like professional urban planning and Google's call for authoritative data providers. To be sure, I am not claiming that we should revoke all models of the city, or that we drag our shapefiles into the trash and right-click "empty." And yet, the differential interpretations of neighborhood space I have outlined thus far are more important than a back and forth of "to-may-to, to-mah-to" – they are embedded in a genealogy of boundaries, drawn and redrawn by a patchwork of local vernacular knowledge, professional urban planning, and digital spatial media. The version of official boundaries that persists today represents, of course, a partial view from above, despite its proliferation in popular digital media. As Campanella notes in his essay on the "glorious mess":

> "By privileging for the power of official maps, we've come to view neighborhoods not as the richly tenuous perceptual spaces emergent from the bottom up, but as doctrine ordained from the top down. We have over-empowered what are, for the most part, arbitrary polygons traceable originally to federal offices and tossed out our own local awareness as ill-informed and erroneous." (2014)

Likewise, I have argued here that by privileging the authority of The 73, Airbnb tacitly affirms a particular vision of the city – one that is a product of securitized, top-down spatial knowledge that conveniently compartmentalizes urban space for maximum profit and touristic consumption while transforming "tenuous perceptual spaces" into vague polygonal abstractions.

CHAPTER 6.

COMMODIFYING AUTHENTICITY: THE EMOTIONAL LABOR OF "PLAYING HOST"

> "Why do employers and supervisors force professional service people to broadcast the Professional Smile? Am I the only consumer in whom high doses of such a smile produce despair? … And yet the Professional Smile's absence now *also* causes despair… I walk away from [my interaction with a counterman] resenting not the counterman's character or absence of goodwill but his lack of *professionalism* in denying me the Smile. What a fucking mess."
>
> -David Foster Wallace, *A Supposedly Fun Thing I'll Never Do Again* (1997, 291)

As detailed in Chapter 2, Airbnb provides a convenient circuit for the commodification of authenticity. As Gary Hall notes, the gig economy more generally has excelled at taking "resources [that have] up until now been difficult for capital to commodify and whose value from an entrepreneurial point of view has therefore been wasted" (2016, 17). Frenken and Schor describe how the gig economy circulates this "idle capacity" in a marketplace of exchanges that generally benefit both parties involved in the contract (2017, 3). Extra space in a home, for example, is rendered anew as idle capacity by the technology of peer-to-peer short-term rental marketplaces like VRBO, HomeAway, and Airbnb. However, I am particularly interested in what some of the spillover effects these marketplaces might have outside of the formal contractual relationship between the platform, a service recipient, and a service provider. In this chapter, I take up feminist theories of emotional labor to argue that one of the ways in which Airbnb commodifies authenticity – in addition to the experiential component for a tourist – is to enroll the spatial practice of neighborhood residents into the performative work of "playing host."

It comes as no surprise that Airbnb works to commodify the notions of (borrowing from their taglines) "belonging anywhere" and "living like a local" – in other words, an "authentic" experience. I have detailed this at length in Chapter 2, but a key point to reiterate is that the authenticity of the experience oftentimes hinges on encounters with local people. Recently, there has been an increasing engagement with affect, emotion, and labor in the context of digital geographies. The works of Daniel Cockayne and Lizzie Richardson stand out as exemplars; however, they are generally

focused on the labor of people within the contractual terms of a gig-economy exchange (Richardson 2015, 2016; Cockayne 2016a, 2016c), or elsewhere about voluntary users of social media (Cockayne 2016b). The degree to which the labor of people *outside* such formal social or economic contracts is swept up into gig-economy relations has been less explored, and that is the line of inquiry I trace in this section. Going forward, I take up feminist theories of emotional labor in order to interrogate how the work of "playing host," performed by neighborhood residents who exist outside of the short-term rental contract between Airbnb hosts and guests, is necessarily exploited (without either emotional or financial reciprocation) by Airbnb's commodification of authenticity.

By "playing host," I mean performing the identity of a welcoming and gregarious New Orleanian; providing food and music recommendations; and more generally ceding one's time to a tourist or non-local visitor. I focus on two interviewees, Leslie and Tom, both of whom expressed a lingering frustration with the work of playing host – and this work is made an encumbrance even more so in the absence of an *actual host*, i.e., whole-home Airbnb listings. According to the Jane Place Neighborhood Sustainability Initiative, 82% of current Airbnb listings in New Orleans are for the whole home. Furthermore, based on data from InsideAirbnb.com, 35.4% of whole-home listings are available for 300 or more days out of the year, and 48.3% of those whole-home rentals are available to be rented for more than half of the year (at least 182 days). These listing availabilities are days during which, left unrented, the home would likely remain unoccupied. Seen in this way, the home becomes less a domicile and more an apparatus for profit – an efficient circuit with which homeowners can collect passive income and through which capital can flow.

In New Orleans, the manipulation and attempted control of locals' behavior in the interest of holistic "image creation" is as old as the tourism industry itself (Stanonis 2011). However, I suggest that Airbnb signals a change in this shaping of behavior, primarily through the mechanisms of *privatization* and *proliferation*. As detailed in Section 2.2, by privatization, I mean the micro-entrepreneurial strategy of urban governance (i.e., shifting risk from the public-private partnership, away from metropolitan projects like the Superdome, toward the individual micro-entrepreneur); and by proliferation, I mean the increasing ease with which tourists can access, inhabit, and

traverse what Dean MacCannell calls the "back regions" of town (i.e., the digital short-term rental market of Airbnb provides access to neighborhoods and spaces that were previously far less accessible). Indeed, "new residential areas are being added to the traditional areas of strong pressure from tourism along the city's main tourist axis, and Airbnb clearly contributes to that pressure" (Gutiérrez et al 2017, 290). Airbnb expediently short-circuits the commodification of these spaces, creating a "wormhole" (Sheppard 2002) that bypasses the corporatized French Quarter and provides affordable accommodations in authentic spaces.

Drawing in particular from Hochschild (1983) and Leidner (1993, 1999), I argue that locals' unpaid emotional labor of playing host is actually a vital part of the continued reproduction of Airbnb's business. In other words, if Airbnb ties "profit… to emotional labor," it is through enrolling a local's emotional labor into a guest's experience of living like a local (Hochschild 1983, 10). The potential effects of this process are manifold, ranging from what David Foster Wallace describes as deep "despair" (1997, 261) to what Hochschild calls "burnout, stress, [and] physical collapse" (1983, 202). More generally, however, they manifested in my interviewees as a simple, pure, and authentic exhaustion.

6.1. Everyday Life: Emotional Labor and Walking the Dog

In the following section, I draw on a conversation in which one woman's everyday experiences of walking her dog were mediated by neighborhood changes, and how she attributed those changes to STR's. In particular, I focus on the emotional labor that she feels obligated to perform in these moments. Leslie, a young white woman who grew up in New Orleans and attended college in the city, has had family in New Orleans for six generations. They are from the Irish Channel, a traditionally working-class, riverfront neighborhood in the uptown part of the city. Leslie stated she was proud of that heritage. Early in our conversation, she excitedly told me about a gift she was working on for her father: a map of where their family had lived since immigrating to New Orleans. She loved her neighborhood, and was enjoying this cartographic undertaking. However, it did not take long for Leslie to voice concern over "seeing [the Irish Channel] being sold" as a "cool, hip community that generations of people built." According to Leslie, "now it's like that authenticity is just being sold." When she thought about the map she was

working on, she said, “I have not tried to look at my family’s addresses versus [Airbnb] – if any of them are being Airbnb’d – cause I will literally lose my head.” Though she followed this statement with a laugh, the situation was clearly no joke.

While we spoke, Leslie returned again and again to the practice of dog walking as an example of when she noticed changes in her neighborhood – perhaps because “walking the dog” is an example of a perfectly quotidian neighborhood activity that could be associated with what neighbors do in their neighborhoods. For Leslie, walking the dog seemed to function as an everyday practice through which she constituted her own sense of belonging. When this practice was defamiliarized, she had new encounters in well-trod spaces. Indeed, Jennie Middleton has documented the ways in which “the practice of everyday walking” mediates urban pedestrian experience (2010, 576), and according to Fletcher and Platt, “Walking is more than *just* walking; it is often a highly sensual and complex activity” (2016, 1). Put another way, dog walking is more than just dog walking, and in fact such moments of seemingly banal experience can be explicated as “a means for articulating cultural forms and norms” (Fletcher and Platt 2016, 4). Below, I address three ways in which Leslie’s everyday experience of dog walking revealed something that was “more than *just* walking”: first, it contributed to her sense of home; second, it signified a changing neighborhood; and third, it exhausted her patience for talking to tourists.

Leslie initially brought up her dog when thinking about why she liked living in New Orleans. During my interviews, I would often ask respondents what were their favorite things about the city. This served the dual purpose of bringing positivity to a usually negative conversation while also providing a sense of what made New Orleans feel like home for my respondents. Leslie spoke of New Orleans with a focus on her family and friends. Since she has “such deep roots” in the city, she stated she felt comfortable there: “[When] you do know your neighbors, it’s phenomenal… the restaurant owners know my dog and me, and like, we walk up Magazine Street.” She seemed to love how “the restaurant up the street gives me lemons so I don’t have to walk the extra four blocks to the grocery store.” A sense of belonging predicated upon kinship with neighbors, friends, and family was apparently a large part of why Leslie remained

drawn to New Orleans. Still, while listing the reasons she liked the city, she quickly slipped into discussing how she was frustrated with tourists in her neighborhood:

> "… that's what makes it even worse when I'm like walking around my neighborhood, and I see like very obvious tourists, and I feel [like I'm] on show, like on display, you know… like I'm part of like, you know, their, their, you know, ride. I'm part of like their Disney package… like a character or something."

Leslie was not the only respondent to feel as though the city was becoming "Disney-fied." Ben, another of my respondents, discussed his mother's concern that "You don't wanna turn New Orleans into Disneyland." And Ann described the enterprise of tourism in New Orleans as Disney-like, describing how she feels that people who visit want to "role play" at being a New Orleanian. It seems fitting, then, that various scholars have discussed the ways in which New Orleans is represented as a Disneyfied, racially harmonious paradise (Gregory 2010, Ferguson 2016, Hartnell 2009), as well as written about the general "Disneyfication" of the city (Souther 2007; see also Gotham 2002, 2005, 2007). Leslie was among a number of my respondents who expressed discomfort with the way that these representations, and their material effects, were coming to bear on her own space and in her own neighborhood.

Things that made Leslie feel at home were thrown into sharp relief by the presence of tourists, which highlights the second context in which she talked about dog walking: noticing neighborhood change. According to Leslie, her neighborhood was "the hood" when she was growing up; the criminal element was only "a couple blocks back" from where she lived. She described how she would see "a group of guys like playing dice [at the park] or… obviously being shady, not wearing shirts." Leslie stated that "usually like when you see them and you're walking your dog, you cross the street." This prompted a deeper reflection:

> "I really realized the difference in my neighborhood was when I saw them – like a group of kinda shady looking guys maybe at the park – and I was… pretty fine with it. And then I saw like a group of tourists from like, I think they were speaking German or something like that… and they were very, just clearly didn't belong like that deep in my neighborhood, and I felt much more threatened by [the tourists] than by like the actual like potential crimin- you know, like… I know who those guys are, like I know who their moms are, you know… if somebody has a bad rap, you see them all the time around the park, but I have no idea who these people are. They're gonna get preyed on by criminals."

Setting aside the question of how Leslie knew this group of men was a bona-fide "criminal element" – we do not know what made them "shady looking" – Leslie stands here in an unexpected alliance with Jerry; Leslie's "big issue [with short-term rentals] is crime." However, she was concerned with crime that might occur as a function of residential displacement, rather than Jerry's fear for the safety of tourists in black neighborhoods. According to Leslie, "by taking residents out of neighborhoods you have fewer eyes on the street" – eyes that Jane Jacobs would perhaps call the "natural proprietors of the street" (Jacobs 1961, 35). Following Jacobs, the safety of sidewalks and streets begins to decline without the watchful eye of stoop-sitting neighbors and the like. Leslie accused short-term rentals of being little more than "blight with lipstick," and was afraid that their effect would be to expel long-term residents from homes that would, in turn, sit empty during the weekdays. This is true in New Orleans, as Trushna Parekh has poignantly noted in her discussion of the "eyes of a network of older women":

> "While gentrifiers might equate safety with greater police presence and fewer people hanging out on the streets or congregating on their porches, for long-standing residents, more people being around and keeping an eye out is precisely what makes them feel safe. Greater policing does not come with the same meanings for longstanding residents as it does for gentrifiers" (2015, 209).

In conjunction with gentrification forces more broadly, as well as the risk of displacement from Airbnb itself, Airbnb imports a tourist population that might perceive the very activity of stoop-sitting surveillance as threatening. Ralph told a story detailing just this, where he rented one of his Airbnb listings to an older couple from Texas. Ralph stated that the rental was in a "very mixed" neighborhood, on a "block in particular [that] had blacks and whites." According to Ralph, twenty minutes after checking in, the couple called to check back out, because the wife was "really freaking out" about the neighbors:

> "Sitting on the – the house is a double – sitting on the other side is a black full-time tenant of mine who's on Section 8, HIV positive, black guy, fifty, my age, fifty something years old, nice as can be, on a walker, you know, probably won't live another five years, would be a long time for him cause he's in rough shape, talking to a black woman across the street where they're stoop sitting, and both very dark, and the woman across the street is probably about late fifties or early sixties and she's sitting in a wheelchair with her grandchild. Now neither one of these people – one with a walker, one with a wheelchair – is coming after her, but she saw that and it really freaked her out."

While stoop-sitting is common and seen as such by long-term residents, some gentrifiers, recent transplants, or Airbnb guests may not view it as such. Ironically, as Ralph's story goes to show, some will even take this combination of leisure and informal surveillance as threatening.

The final context in which Leslie discussed dog walking was during the emotional labor of playing host to tourists in the neighborhood. Using the example of encountering tourists while walking her dog, Leslie voiced exhaustion over accommodating her self and her time to tourists. People would often stop, pet her dog, and try to start conversation with Leslie, who had fashioned a response with which she would quickly determine whether or not they were local. "I'm lazy, and I don't even care at this point anymore," said Leslie. "I'll ask people where they're from and where they went to school, really, cause it's the lazy New Orleanian way of knowing everything about somebody." According to Leslie, it was easy to tell "within five breaths… of meeting someone" if a person was local. If they were not, Leslie would shift her composure, recoiling with some variation of, *It's too bad I never meet people from the neighborhood anymore*. Ultimately, she was tired of performing the identity of a welcoming, gregarious New Orleans native – tired of fulfilling the role of host, in place of a host who was nowhere to be seen.

6.2. Airbnb and emotional labor

Leslie's work of playing host is a clear-cut example emotional labor. As discussed in Chapter 2, emotional labor "requires one to induce or suppress feeling in order to sustain the outward countenance that produces the proper state of mind in others" (Hochschild 1983, 7). But in whose emotional labor are we interested here – and what is the "proper" state of mind in question? Airbnb's product creation incorporates many actors, and those whose emotional labor is tied to profit ranges from hosts and property managers to guests and neighborhood residents. Here, I sketch out the costs of emotional labor in terms of three groups: service providers (hosts or property managers), non-worker service recipients (Airbnb guests), and non-worker non-recipients (non-host locals). In this section, I pose a guiding question: *whose labor does Airbnb need in order to reproduce its business?* Ultimately, I argue that one vital group is neighborhood residents, whose

quotidian work of making "authentic" space and providing neighborly encounters is enrolled into Airbnb's larger commercial project. In other words, my argument is that Airbnb represents another mechanism that presses everyday life into labor.

To illustrate how this works I ask, what role do Airbnb's participants play in the reproduction of its business model? It clearly needs the labor of the host, who provides lodging and sometimes hosting, and the involvement of the guest, who helps produce a service interaction. In addition to these two groups (and recognizing that hosts are not present during 82% of guests' visits in New Orleans), it seems crucial to note that the legwork of Airbnb's promises that guests can "belong anywhere" or "live like a local" inevitably falls upon residents of the city; in other words, the non-host locals such as Leslie who bear no contractual obligation to Airbnb. This is not always a problem, but it can be. As such, the guiding question requires attention *beyond* the contractual relationship between the service provider (host, property manager; the "smiler") and the service recipient (tourists, guests; the "smiled upon"). In the case of Airbnb, this refers to non-host, local New Orleanians (the proximate smile).

To briefly review the literature outlined in Section 2.3.2, emotional labor is the management of personal feeling. Particularly in cases where "private emotion has been subordinated to commercial logic," emotional labor can have deleterious psychological effects, such as burnout, stress, and physical collapse, for an individual (Hochschild 1982, 185-187). While emotional labor is not performed equally between a service provider and a service recipient, it *affects* both parties. Service recipients are "part of the work process" and co-producers of the interaction (Leidner 1999, 83). For some corporations – like the multi-level marketing company Amway, for instance – the social networks of employees are enrolled into Amway's commercial project. Leidner writes, "There is no part of distributors' lives that Amway does not see as relevant to the success of the business" (1993, 38).

In particular, Hochschild describes how, in the case of airline hostesses, Delta would try to instill its values into its workers beyond the confines of the aircraft or the office – in other words, it encouraged hostesses to be ambassadors of Delta at all times (including their non-paid leisure time) and in every way (1983, 99-101). For non-host locals like Tom and Leslie, Airbnb relies upon their pre-existing emotional work as good

neighbors who share knowledge, create local color and perform authenticity as a matter of being. Sharply contrasting to the Amway and Delta examples, the leverage of emotional labor is happenstance – part of the place-making of cities – rather than within an economic transaction like employment. In this way, it is difficult to opt out of the digital economy (or even be aware of one's enrollment), and in the digital production of authentic space, individuals like Leslie and Tom's are always plugged in. One might also think of their actions as their "habitus" – Bordieu's (1984) term for our lifestyles and tastes that have been produced through interlocking class relations – which Airbnb has commodified.

Airbnb and its advocates in New Orleans have taken efforts to influence the attitude and behavior of non-host neighbors, mostly in the form of marketing. For example, in the weeks leading up to a city council's vote on short-term rental regulations in 2017, Airbnb ran a nearly $1 million ad campaign in New Orleans including a number of television and radio spots. According to an Airbnb spokeswoman, the media blitz was meant to ensure that both policymakers and the community "understand what Airbnb is and the folks who are on our platform and why they're using it" (Litten 2016). The ads, which featured hosts telling personal stories detailing how they benefit themselves and their community by using Airbnb, are thick with discourses of "sharing" as they attempt to portray Airbnb as generous and benevolent to non-host citizens. In short, they are trying to curry favor of the public. In another case, when Airbnb underwent its 2014 major rebranding campaign, CEO Brian Chesky suggested that the Bélo symbol – their new pretzel-shaped logo – could be used by anybody who wanted to create "their own impression of the brand." According to Chesky, "A restaurant could put this on their window telling travelers that it's an Airbnb-friendly place" (Carr 2014). Parmett has described this process in the context of HBO's *Treme*, arguing, "Treme legitimates a neoliberal logic that rationalizes the rebuilding of certain neighbourhoods depends upon the ability of residents to entrepreneurialize themselves and their neighbourhoods into the public–private partnerships of the media industry and city government" (2014, 291). Similarly, the more people Airbnb can enroll (but not pay) into its philosophy of shared, universal belonging, the more integrated and profitable it becomes.

Of course, the success of Airbnb's business – at least at the level of marketing – relies upon the authenticity of the experience, of which New Orleans locals are a vital part. As I've argued, their work of playing host is exploited in the interest of Airbnb reproducing their business. Importantly, as actors outside the formal economic transaction become swept up into an emotional labor process, this enrollment of non-employees blurs the lines between public and private enterprise. Airbnb demands emotional labor of non-employees on a spatial basis. Neighborhood residents are enrolled into an emotional labor process – one whose goal is the reproduction of so-called authenticity – merely by virtue of where they live, i.e., their proximity to the Airbnb listing "wormhole" (Sheppard 2002). So, my points here are twofold: first, that non-employees are necessarily wrapped up in Airbnb's economic relations of emotional labor, and second, that the process is spatially contingent. It is not just voluntary service recipients who are part of the work process, but involuntary non-participants (i.e., neighborhood residents, locals) as well.

The expected response may be, "What do you intend Airbnb to do – pay every citizen who has an interaction with tourists?" That is, in fact, exactly what I expect Airbnb to do, and it is something Airbnb can do with ease, in the form of benevolently (rather than defensively) engaging with the cities in which it operates; adhering to regulations drawn locally and by a third-party with no significant benefit to gain from short-term renting; taking seriously the fears of gentrification by making efforts to reduce multiply-owned whole-home rentals; and sharing a usable version of its proprietary data in order to make enforcements possible and hold itself accountable. Some of these are things that Airbnb is already doing, or trying to do, and some are things that Airbnb has expressly defied doing. If people are going to create value and perform labor on behalf of Airbnb, it is more than reasonable that they be accordingly compensated.

6.3. Shaping the behavior of citizens

To be sure, many local New Orleanians have no problem with providing various recommendations and sustaining friendly interactions with tourists. On the contrary, they often willingly perform the emotional labor of playing host to strangers in neighborhood spaces. This was clear in many of my personal interactions while visiting the city, but

most evidently in Tom, another of my respondents. According to Tom, "New Orleanians love their city and they love to show it off." Tom lives in the Bayou St. John neighborhood, in a house bought in '89 that "probably hadn't been painted in fifty years." In the past, he explained, "whenever I would meet… a tourist I would say, 'Hey, make sure you go to such and such, make sure you go to [this and that],' little things that maybe they wouldn't be aware of, because we love to show our city off." Usually this kind of emotional labor did not merit any formal reciprocation for Tom, because the encounter was self-satisfying. This is consistent with Ashforth and Humphrey's (1993) observation that emotional labor does not always require conscious effort, and can result in a positive exchange when the expression is sincere. The challenge is presented when his voluntary labor of playing host becomes enrolled within Airbnb's larger commercial project. Much like Leslie, Tom expressed a deepening frustration with "tourists in my neighborhood":

> "I'm not as nice as I used to be. I don't go out of my way to tell a tourist, 'You gotta go to such and such, you gotta do this, you gotta do that,' cause I don't like tourists as much as I used to, I really don't. Because I don't want them in my neighborhood."

This could signify a deep alienation of Tom's behavior as a good neighbor, or as Hochschild puts it, an estrangement from his own smile. One of the results of this enrollment of everyday behavior is to extend and render ambiguous the working day. "I'm not as nice as I used to be," ruminates Tom: how can he determine what emotional work is out of goodwill, for the reward of giving friendly advice, versus how much is in the interest of profit for Airbnb?

6.3.1. Smile… for the State! Emotional labor in the New Orleans tourism industry

Tom appeared frustrated with the way that Airbnb was affecting how he behaved in his own space, but it is important to note that the attempted control of citizens' behavior in regards to tourism began long before Airbnb. The truth is that state-led efforts to extract emotional labor from residents, under the pretense that their work of playing host would lead to a future return, is as old as the tourism industry itself. Indeed, the city of New Orleans has a long track record of attempting to carefully shape the behavior of its residents in order to enroll them into a larger project of producing a city amenable to and

desirable for tourists. Anthony J. Stanonis describes how, in the early 1930s, the New Orleans Association of Commerce underwent a series of "efforts to make locals more courteous to visitors and knowledgeable about popular sites" (2011, 64). This included, in collaboration with the New Orleans Conventions and Visitors Bureau (NOCVB), the distribution of hundreds of thousands of promotional materials to other US cities, which bore slogans like "New Orleans – America's Most Interesting City" (28). The organization went so far to "ensure the friendly reception of tourists" that they "arranged several meetings with the 'entire police force'" in an effort to state-sanction their hospitality (65). According to Stanonis:

> "Businessmen strove to enlist the 'citizenship in helping to enable our visitors'... By awakening New Orleanians to the economic value of tourism, businessmen, and politicians attempted to spark a word-of-mouth promotional juggernaut. … The goal was to convert New Orleanians into gracious hosts." (64-65)

If the city were to be a space for touristic consumption, then its residents were the cultural ambassadors. They were the front lines, the boots on the ground, the smiling concierge at the delta's doorstep. This is still the case, and neoliberal economic logic is used to justify the unpaid emotional labor of city residents.

In contrast to Airbnb, New Orleans has hosted state initiatives for enrolling residents into the project of tourism. The New Orleans Will (NOW) program is a contemporary instantiation of molding and shaping emotional labor in the service of tourism. This citywide campaign, created by the NOCVB, exists to raise awareness that "while visitors may come and go, their dollars stay here – and ripple through the community to fund city services, police, schools, people salaries, and ultimately, improve the quality of life for every New Orleanian" (New Orleans Will, 2017). A NOW post from 2014 instructs city residents to stay informed, support tourism, "spread the word to your neighbors and be welcoming to all visitors." The organization describes tourism's benefit to the city as a ripple effect – "like a drop of water in a bucket, a tourist dollar generates a ripple effect throughout the city" (New Orleans Will, 2014). Residents are encouraged to play host for tourists, and promised that if they do, they will see a return on their investment of such labor.

Tourism policy, particularly in New Orleans, is a textbook example of neoliberal urban governance. As Alan Lew has noted, tourism development "almost always has a

neoliberal planned placemaking agenda" (Lew 2017, 448). Indeed, Tom's notion that a rising tide will lift all boats, and therefore that New Orleans residents should participate in and support the tourism machine even if it does not directly benefit them, is a trademark of neoliberal state policy as articulated by David Harvey (2005, 64). In his words, neoliberalism endorses the principle that "the elimination of poverty (both domestically and worldwide) can best be secured through free markets and free trade" (65). However, there are contradictions internal to this idea; Harvey suggests that neoliberal state policy leads to market failure, entrepreneurial fetishism, and monopoly power (67-70). In describing New Orleans' tourism industry, Kevin Fox Gotham defines placemaking, or "urban branding," as the appropriation of a place's "repertoire of authenticity" in the interest of attracting capital and generating local support for tourism investment (Gotham 2007, 20).

Following this train of thought, while tourism is undoubtedly New Orleans' most productive industry, it is also true that the benefits of tourism do not reach all residents equally. As discussed in Section 4.1, Gotham (2005) has labeled the increasing power of multinational corporate capital in shaping the tourism and real estate market in New Orleans "tourism gentrification." In post-Katrina analyses of recovery and revitalization, Gladstone and Préau (2008) and Johnson (2015) analyze the degrees to which tourism redevelopment after the storm was generally a vehicle for gentrification – or, in other words, a "brazen extension of the neoliberal project" (Peck 2007, 103). In short, the ostensibly wide-reaching benefits of tourism dollars are not evenly distributed among the city's residents, and that poor distribution occurs especially along the vectors of race and class. While this is true of any economic activity, the issue becomes especially salient when investments like Bikeshare are made, reportedly for locals, but in actuality are for tourism promotion and accommodation.

Tom expressed wariness toward this idea that macroeconomic benefits would trickle down, using New Orleans' recently implemented Bikeshare program as an example. Bikeshare is a transportation system that, for a monthly, weekly, or hourly fee, offers "online and on-the-spot opportunities to reserve and rent a bike that will take you where you need to go. At the end of a journey, just drop it off at the nearest bike share station." According to the city, Bikeshare "does not compromise benefits to residents"

(City of New Orleans, 2017). Unsurprisingly, as its name would suggest, the Bikeshare program leans on well-established discourses of sharing that promote values of community and inclusion. Tom's skepticism of Bikeshare was predicated on the belief that the program was, in reality, designed to help tourists more easily navigate New Orleans' neighborhoods:

> "I don't believe [Bikeshare is] for locals – it's really something that was created for tourists to promote… tourism in our neighborhoods, which goes right along with Airbnbs… it makes it a little bit more user friendly for tourists inside of neighborhoods, it makes it just one more way to sell New Orleans as a tourist destination. And uh, some people have taken great exception to that attitude and that opinion, um, because they feel like… *why are you pissed off because it helps tourists, because it helps locals too*? *It brings the whole community up*. And my point is it – it costs $180 to have a bike for a year on bikeshare. Well, why don't you just go buy a bike?"

Tom did not subscribe to the position that New Orleans residents would see a benefit from the Bikeshare program; rather, he expressed the opinion that Bikeshare was just another mechanism for enrolling neighborhoods that were previously less accessible into the tourism machine. In doing so he was deeply critical towards promises of sustainable consumption made by participants in the sharing economy. He connected the program to Airbnb because he felt as though they both served the same interests: the production of an authentic experience at the expense of the very people who make the experience authentic. For Tom, both Airbnb and Bikeshare were indicative of the city's proclivity to put tourists before residents: "it's one more way to sell New Orleans."

6.3.2. Neoliberal logic in the Alliance for Neighborhood Prosperity

Earlier, I detailed how Airbnb spent nearly $1 million dollars on an advertising campaign in New Orleans leading up to the city council's short-term rental vote, in an effort to curry favor with the public. I also discussed Chesky's suggestion that restaurants put the Bélo symbol in their windows so that Airbnb visitors will know it is an "Airbnb friendly place." Both of these represent ways in which Airbnb has tried to shape the attitudes and behavior of residents in cities where it operates. In New Orleans, Airbnb and its spokespeople – particularly a group of short-term rental advocates called the Alliance for Neighborhood Prosperity (ANP) – have taken a number of other steps to engender support, encourage behavior, and highlight the socio-economic benefits of Airbnb.

Most notable was Airbnb's phone campaign, leading up to the city council's STR vote, to generate support among hosts in New Orleans. Lucy, one of my interviewees who lives in Treme and rents her home on Airbnb when she goes out of town and during weekends, explained that an Airbnb spokesperson called her at her home:

> "[Airbnb] asked me to like attend the City Hall meeting, I think cause they wanted me to be like, you know, 'Don't regulate.' And I was like, well, I absolutely support regulations… I'm sure they called everybody they could. You know, um, and I think that's just a sign of like you know corporate power, like they have the money to do that you know um… [Laughter] when I said I support regulations they weren't like, oh well then don't come. … They were like, oh yeah absolutely, and you know we just wanna work with the city on this, but you know the city should hear like you know the positive experiences you've had with it."

Ralph expressed that he had been "called a number of times" by Airbnb, and according to April, "[Airbnb] were calling us every day for like… you know, really like making sure that I knew I was a property owner and my rights were being infringed… they were calling me all the time." During my interview with April, she explained that Airbnb was encouraging her to attend social functions with other Airbnb hosts in New Orleans:

> "They wanted me to come to like, like, um, like whatever like happy hours and all these things where they were trying to cultivate – it was super strategic, they were trying to cultivate this identity among Airbnb property owners, which is like a really good organizing technique, so that then we could all be on the same page when it came to legislation, and we could like say, 'Oh no.' And so they… really wanted to like remove this like, 'Oh we're just like distinct human beings in this community,' and create an identity so that… we could organize."

In asking Airbnb hosts to attend the public forum and more casual social functions, Airbnb was not simply trying to encourage behavior – they were attempting to generate solidarity among Airbnb hosts who could 1) present themselves as a localized group of everyday citizens, and 2) represent Airbnb as a benevolent organization to the community at large.

For examples of what a mobilized, collective identity surrounding short-term rentals can do, we need to look no farther than the Alliance for Neighborhood Prosperity (ANP). As discussed briefly in Chapter 4, the ANP is a group of homeowners who represent, according to my interview with a member named Dennis, "about twelve hundred listings" in New Orleans. As of October 2017, that number had increased to 1,300 (Peck and Maldonado 2017). Although Dennis would not reveal the ANP's

membership numbers, he implied during our interview that it was close to two hundred, meaning it largely represents owners of multiple properties. The organization was responsible for a significant portion of lobbying in New Orleans on behalf of Airbnb, having commissioned economic impact reports from an economic research consultancy (Levendis and Dicle 2016a, 2016b) and worked directly with the city council to influence the regulations that were ultimately adopted in December 2016. According to Dennis, after he had spent enough time talking about Airbnb in interviews and public forums, "San Francisco started calling my cellphone. 'Hi, we hear you, we got the message, we're coming.'" To quote Dennis at length:

> "[Airbnb] came and they talked to us, and HomeAway talked to us. And they say we realize that we can't fight legal challenges in every city. We realize that there are groups like you that have been afraid to come forward because of the NIMBY's, not in my backyards, that have been fed lobbyist propaganda from the hotel industry… I started… basically with my pants around my ankle, do whatever you want with me… here I am naked, I'm exposed, do whatever you want, slap me, fine me, whatever, but I'm here standing. …
>
> We gathered more support and momentum than the opposition… because of Internet, because we could put those hashtags, we could put those tags in there, and we got them, we got the support. When we went to City Council we were polite, we were respectful, and we were *fact-based data-driven*. Not horror stories, not 'Oh they're having bachelor parties, oh they're swinging from mattresses, oh they're puking, they're peeing, they're making noise.' Where are the stats on that? 'Oh, they're driving up the rent.' No. *Here are data, here are stats*.

Considering the members of the ANP appear to list multiple properties on sites like Airbnb, and therefore stand to gain significantly from loose regulations, the platform's functional partnership with the ANP suggests that they are more of an "astroturf" organization – a heavily incentivized public group that masquerades as a mass movement – than a grassroots one (Walker 2014, Bulajewski 2014). In addition to acting as a de-facto advocate for Airbnb at the local level, the ANP – and Dennis, during our interview – personified the mythic benefits of data-driven policy. The ANP describes itself as "data-driven decision making" that "opposes policy decisions that are made based on anecdotes and fear" (Alliance 2017, "About Us"). As such, the organization "rejects" arguments from short-term rental opponents unless they provide "data-driven" evidence for their claims. In other words, in order to participate in conversations about short-term rentals, ANP demands a degree of quantitative intelligibility from those with whom it

engages, putting Tom and Leslie in a tough position to argue against their claims (Alliance 2017, "Private Home Rentals").

This perspective works in ANP's interest, since they have the requisite capital to produce so-called data-driven evidence – for example, they commissioned economic impact studies from the University of New Orleans and other private firms – while many short-term rental opponents do not. Following Zook et al, the ANP's attitude is dangerous: "it is necessary to avoid the naiveté that would lead one to assume that [big] data can provide a substantive understanding of the world without simultaneously being grounded in the requisite theoretical perspectives to inform such an analysis" (2017, 8). While the ANP are not speaking specifically about big data, Shelton et al (2014) have discussed the tendency of big data to fetishize data of all sizes, and ANP's attitude toward what constitutes a valid position regarding urban policy was certainly informed by a steadfast adherence to numbers while simultaneously rejecting any other theoretical perspectives. The ANP's political activity included lobbying both the City Planning Commission and City Council (Woodward 2016b), as well as distributing a stock email form that members could complete and have automatically sent to their councilors (Alliance 2017, "Letter to City Council"). The organization – which embodies the neoliberal logic towards tourism policy I have tried to outline above – proved influential toward the short-term rental regulations that were ultimately adopted.

What all of this points to is a dynamic that privileges the propertied homeowners, the entrenched authorities, and the politically empowered in New Orleans. Citizens that create a friendly and authentic atmosphere for Airbnb tourists, simply by virtue of their everyday activities, are enrolled into Airbnb's promises of "belonging" and "living locally." Their emotional labor is necessary for the reproduction of Airbnb's platform. Furthermore, the policies that enable Airbnb to operate are informed by a curated neoliberal logic, and while Airbnb is not necessarily doing something completely new, it does radically amplify and spatialize the degree to which residents, and their emotional labor of playing host in particular, might become enrolled into these urban circuits of capital.

6.4. Conclusion, Part I: Neutral ground

In both cases, Tom and Leslie discussed how they try to resist this emotional labor of playing host. Unfortunately, such work can still be psychologically harmful. When describing himself as "not as nice as [he] used to be," Tom seemed to be particularly affected by what Hochschild calls "burnout" (1983, 187). In a similar vein, another of my respondents described his thinning faculties for frustration as "resistance exhaustion." Hochschild suggests that the negative effects of emotional labor could be reduced "if workers could feel a greater sense of control over the conditions of their work lives" (187). But how might workers accomplish this degree of autonomy? Residents in Airbnb-heavy neighborhoods are people doing the quotidian work of reproducing their own authentic space and engaging in neighborly interactions with tourists in the interest of a commercial logic to which they have no real onus of a formal contract. As Lizzie Richardson has argued, digital technologies enable the boundaries of the workplace to become "emergent," ambiguously drawn beyond the firm or the factory (2016). Such is the case with Airbnb, and since this is intentional on their part – as contracts would obligate the company financially and otherwise – it is unclear how control might be regained.

As mentioned in Chapter 4, Airbnb often functions as a stand-in, or signifier, for larger issues in the community and the city. Talking about Airbnb often led Tom to discuss a pride in his neighborhood, one that was ultimately rooted in a strong sense of place. Tom was shamelessly territorial in his description of his neighborhood:

> "New Orleanians, because it's an old city, really really do take pride in that sense of space and sense of, of ownership of that space. So you know… I think that that translates into… 'This is my neighborhood,' you know… 'I have a sense of ownership in this neighborhood and, and, how dare you invade it,' you know, that sort of thing."

Here, Tom brings up an important spatial component about Airbnb. It is not simply the increase in tourism that bothers him, but rather the distribution of where tourists go, and their increasing presence in what he feels is a personal, intimate space. Tom expressed that this "invasion" represented the tendency of New Orleans' government to privilege the wellbeing of tourists before the wellbeing of residents. In his words, "When you start populating neighborhoods with tourists, and the city starts to promote that, that pisses me off."

To elaborate this concept beyond Airbnb, he discussed the example of neutral ground. In New Orleans, what would elsewhere be called a median – the grassy space between large bidirectional roadways – is referred to as "neutral ground." This local nomenclature can be traced to the early 19th century political geography of New Orleans, when Canal Street was a dividing line between two embittered and semi-autonomous municipalities: on one side, the Creole-populated French Quarter, and on the other, the Anglo-populated Faubourg St. Mary (in present day, the Central Business District). The tree-bordered median on Canal Street was considered a "neutral ground" between the territories (Campanella 2015). The phrase was eventually extended to include any median in the city, and today the term neutral ground is "spoken daily, without self-awareness, by just about every New Orleanian – and by no one else in the nation" (Campanella 2015). Turning once again to the example of Treme, we can see how the neutral ground has cultural import as well – before Claiborne Avenue's neutral ground was demolished by the I-10 expressway, it was home to numerous black-owned businesses, and remains popular for picnics, community events, and second-line parade stops.

According to section 154-1031 of the city code, parking is prohibited on the neutral ground in New Orleans. The street signs that convey this to motorists, however, reduce in size the font of "neutral ground," tucking the phrase between a pair of parentheses (see Figure 6.1). Tom stated that he understood the reasoning for this – people who know not to park there are already familiar with the term – but he still felt that the signs were demonstrative of the city's tendency to prioritize its tourists at the expense of its residents. He held the same sentiment toward Bikeshare and toward Airbnb, all of which are situated within a structural power dynamic that appears to render New Orleans citizens as second-class to tourists.[27] In short, Tom suggested that in order to make the city more intelligible for touristic consumption (i.e., adjusting a local shibboleth to improve out-of-towner comprehension), the local government was treating its citizens as an afterthought – as something between parentheses.

[27] I do not mean to erase other kinds of social difference that exist within the city – for example, race and class and gender – and how those factors come to bear on citizenship as it is experienced on a day to day basis. Tom and Leslie are both white, and I understood Leslie to come from a wealthy family. It is not clear whether emotional labor inflicts itself the same way upon black citizens or significantly poorer citizens, although, as I have argued earlier in the thesis, they are enrolled into the tourist industry and into Airbnb in a myriad other ways.

Figure 6.1: Sign that prohibits parking on the neutral ground (photo by Benjamin Lukoff, http://www.flickriver.com/photos/lukobe/tags/neworleans/).

6.5. Conclusion, Part II: The Sunset at the Foot of Canal Street

John Kennedy Toole's novel *A Confederacy of Dunces* begins with Ignatius J. Reilly,[28] standing outside the D. H. Holmes department store on New Orleans' Canal Street, waiting anxiously for the arrival of his mother. As he surveys the scene, Ignatius notices that it is late in the day: "Looking up, he saw the sun beginning to descend over the Mississippi at the foot of Canal Street" (Toole 1980, 2). Toole tucks this sentence rather innocuously in the middle of a paragraph, and it is easy to overlook, but in the final moments of this thesis, let us momentarily consider the geography of the sunset at the foot of Canal Street.

[28] q.v. footnote 7.

Dividing the French Quarter from the Central Business District, Canal Street runs southeast/northwest through the heart of the city's downtown. The "foot" is where Canal Street abuts the water at the riverfront port. From there, one can take the Canal Street Ferry across the Mississippi River, across the water to Algiers Point, which is located in an area known locally as the West Bank.

Similar to the phrase "neutral ground," West Bank and East Bank can be a misleading nomenclature for non-locals, since the East Bank is located south and west of the West Bank and the West Bank located north and east of the East Bank (see Figure 6.2). Looking at the city in its entirety, an argument could also be made for the West Bank being more of a true south and the West Bank being more of a true north – but, in any case, what is clear at first glance is that the West Bank is anything but west, and the East Bank anything but east.

To understand the logic behind this terminology, it is important to discuss the physical geography of New Orleans. Just before the Mississippi River reaches the wetlands of southern Louisiana, after carving the US into convenient eastern and western halves for over 2,000 miles as part of a deltaic system so large it shames "hyperbole into understatement," it begins to really curve and bend (Kelman 2006, 1). About a hundred miles from the gulf coast, "the meandering river turns sharply to the south, then abruptly snakes east and as quickly heads north, finally returning to a southeasterly course" (2006, 4). This hydrological triple step creates a little terrestrial crescent – not quite an island, but with Lake Ponchartrain to the north, nearly so – and is the land upon which Jean-Baptiste Le Moyne, sieur de Bienville, with the aid of a Native American guide, founded New Orleans in 1718. Despite being located on a "wretched" *site* – "the actual real estate which the city occupies" – New Orleans was built in a fantastic *situation* – a city's "place with respect to neighboring places." To quote Peirce Lewis, "If a city's situation is good enough, its site will be altered to make do" (2003, 19-20). And so it was: with the aid of levees and various engineering marvels to accommodate for the fact that "no part of New Orleans is more than fifteen feet above sea level," the city has expanded far beyond its original confines of what is known today as the French Quarter (Lewis 2003, 24).

Figure 6.2: The foot of Canal Street (map by author).

What is seen as the southeastern part of the city on a map is, technically speaking, located on the western side of the Mississippi River, and likewise, what is seen as the northwestern part of the city is located on the eastern side of the Mississippi. It is a result of those sharp curves and sudden bends in the Mississippi River that New Orleanians, in a set of convoluted discursive gymnastics, call the technically south and east bank "West" and the technically north and west bank "East." Without belaboring the point any longer, it is clear that from his vantage outside of the D. H. Holmes department store, looking down toward the foot of Canal Street, the setting sun would be at Ignatius' back, despite his gaze being focused upon the West Bank, where the sun sets only in name.

"*Looking up, he saw the sun beginning to descend over the Mississippi at the foot of Canal Street*." Why would Toole write this line? The most likely answer is an in-joke: a proposition to giggle, from one New Orleanian to another, knowing that the contradiction would be subtle enough for an out-of-town tourist to overlook but just perceptible enough to give a local some pause. The line is an acknowledgement of the regional linguistic and cultural traditions that uniquely characterize New Orleans and are often held in esteem by its residents – but, equally so, it is a recognition of the embedded

and contingent historical processes that more broadly constitute how people make sense of and navigate the places in which they live on a day-to-day basis, in New Orleans and beyond. Toole's joke calls forth a question: what does it mean to, as we might say in Airbnb's marketing rhetoric, "belong anywhere?"

In this thesis, I have attempted to track how the impacts of Airbnb on neighborhoods in New Orleans do not always align with their marketing rhetoric of authenticity (i.e., "belong anywhere," "live like a local"), focusing particularly but not exclusively on the Treme neighborhood. Drawing on a conceptual framework that treats authenticity as a technique of power in neoliberal place-making and tourism geographies, I have argued that Airbnb contributes to a recalibration of the spatial and temporal rhythms of neighborhood life in the city, particularly in regards to how neighbors find themselves enrolled via their emotional labor into the creation of value for Airbnb and for the local tourism industry.

Where this thesis began with a funeral – more precisely, a mock jazz funeral for the death of affordable housing – it will end on a birthday. 2018 marks the city's tricentennial celebration, the three hundredth anniversary of Bienville's discovering the crescent-shaped bend in the Mississippi that would eventually become New Orleans. 2018 also marks the departure of Mayor Mitch Landrieu and the entry of Mayor LaToya Cantrell. This year signals a number of changes, of which STR policies are but one. Still, the debate over STR's continues to thrive, and as the city bears down on the one-year anniversary of the implementation of their new regulatory framework, the public calls for revisions ring louder than ever.

In this regard, it will be paramount to engage with organizations that are situated in the city, embedded in the debates, and publishing important work that transforms merely knowing about injustice into doing something about injustice (Werner et al 2017). Jane Place Neighborhood Sustainability Initiative, which recently published a report on the long-term impacts of short-term rentals (2018), is an excellent example of this work. Airbnb and similar companies should approach this research with an open mind; respond to critique not defensively but empathetically; be willing to engage and listen to the voices of people who occupy the actual places in which they operate; and replicate in praxis the values of community and "sharing" that they embrace in discourse.

APPENDIX: TIMELINE OF STR REGULATORY MEASURES IN NEW ORLEANS

Date	Description
Pre-summer 2014	• All STR's are defined as "transient vacation rentals. • Some discontent over STR's, but little news coverage in New Orleans.
July 10, 2014 – October 6, 2016	• Passage of CZO text amendment on 7/10/14 to redefine "transient vacation rentals." • News coverage on the STR debate proliferates widely, including in *The New York Times* and local papers *The Lens, The Advocate*, and *The Times-Picayune.* • Late 2015, City Council requests a study of STR's from CPC, with recommendations for how to regulate. • In August 2016, CPC recommends three STR categories that will be voted on by City Council (see Table 1.1). • Political activity and civic engagement from residents and neighborhood organizations is at its peak.
October 20, 2016 – January 1, 2017	City Council votes on 10/20/16 to adopt new STR regulations, which are accepted in December and include provisions for: • STR licensing and enforcement process, including a public STR registry • CZO amendment for STR as its own category of land use • $1/night from all STR revenue earmarked for Neighborhood Housing Improvement Fund (NHIF) • "Corporate Endeavor Agreement" between New Orleans City Government and Airbnb, which stipulates 1) the reporting, collection, and remittance of local taxes and 2) limited data sharing
January 1, 2017 – April 1, 2017	• New Orleans city government is working with Airbnb and other STR companies to share data and set up a registration process for hosts. • Registration process for hosts is live on 3/13/2017.
Post-April 1, 2017	• STR regulations take legal effect. • Starting April 1, fines are levied against STR's in the French Quarter. • Starting May 15, fines are levied against unlicensed STR's across the city via Administrative Subpoena. • Neighborhood organizations and STR lobbying groups alike continue to critique regulations.

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Zukin, Sharon. 2010. *Naked City: The Death and Life of Authentic Urban Places*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

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2013 – 2016 **Geographic Information Science Certificate, University of Mary Washington**
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EMPLOYMENT & APPOINTMENTS

2016 Planning Intern, *Henrico County Planning Department*
2015 Planning Intern, *Henrico County Planning Department*
2015 Nonfiction Editor, *Rappahannock Review Literary Journal*
2015 Map Editor, *Digital Communications Internship*
2014 – 2016 Research Assistant, *Transformation of Racialized Southern American Heritage Landscapes*

FUNDING, AWARDS, & HONORS

2018 AAG Historical Geography Specialty Group Ralph Brown Paper Award ($150)
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2017 AAG Historical Geography Specialty Group Ralph Brown Paper Award ($150)
2017 University of Kentucky Graduate Student Congress Travel Grant ($300)
2016 UMW President's List
2015 – 2016 Geography Alumni Scholarship ($2,000)
2016 UMW Department of Geography: Harold Thompson Straw Award
2015 – 2016 Who's Who Among Students in American Universities & Colleges
2015 – 2016 Mortar Board: National College Senior Honor Society
2015 – 2016 Gamma Theta Upsilon: International Geography Honorary Society
2016 UMW Writing Contest Winner ($100)

2012 – 2016 UMW Dean's List
2015 Rountree Endowment for Geography ($145)
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2014 – 2015 LaVergne Tuck Woody '68 Scholarship ($700)
2014 – 2015 Roland J. and Frances H. Brown Scholarship ($1,400)

PUBLICATIONS

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